

The Call of the Wild

Jack London

edited by
Nicholas Ruddick





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"This is the best scholarly edition of *The Call of the Wild* currently available, with a superb, wide-ranging introduction by Nicholas Ruddick that is a model of judicious lucidity. The edition is also greatly enhanced by a series of fascinating primary documents situating the novella in an array of turn-of-the-twentieth-century cultural contexts, including the Klondike Gold Rush, Darwin on dogs and men, theories of atavism and instinct, and controversies surrounding charges of plagiarism against Jack London.

Highly recommended."

Jonathan Auerbach, University of Maryland

A best-seller from its first publication in 1903, *The Call of the Wild* tells the story of Buck, a big mongrel dog who is shipped from his comfortable life in California to Alaska, where he must adapt to the harsh life of a sled dog during the Klondike Gold Rush. The narrative recounts Buck's brutal obedience training, his struggle to meet the demands of human masters, and his rise to the position of lead sled dog as a result of his superior physical and mental qualities. Finally, Buck is free to respond to the "call" of the wilderness. Over a hundred years after its publication, Jack London's "dog story" retains the enduring appeal of a classic.

This Broadview Edition includes a critical introduction that explores London's life and legacy and the complex scientific and psychological ideas drawn upon by London in writing the story. The appendices include material on the Klondike, Darwin's writings on dogs, other contemporary writings on instinct and atavism, and maps of the regions in which the story takes place.

Nicholas Ruddick is Professor of English at the University of Regina. He is the editor of the Broadview Editions of H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* and Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did*.

ISBN 978-1-55111-844-4



9 781551 118444

Cover: "RNWMP Patrol Dawson to Herschel Island," 1908. Photograph by Jerry Doody.

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THE CALL OF THE WILD

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Figure 1: Jack London, courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

London, Jack, 1876-1916

The call of the wild / Jack London ; edited by Nicholas Ruddick.

(Broadview editions)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-55111-844-4

1. Dogs—Fiction. I. Ruddick, Nicholas II. Title.
III. Series: Broadview editions

PS3523.O46C3 2009 813'.52 C2009-904609-1

Broadview Editions

The Broadview Editions series represents the ever-changing canon of literature in English by bringing together texts long regarded as classics with valuable lesser-known works.

Advisory editor for this volume: Juliet Sutcliffe

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NBN International, Estover Road, Plymouth UK PL6 7PY
Tel: 44 (0) 1752 202300 Fax: 44 (0) 1752 202330
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Australia and New Zealand

NewSouth Books
c/o TL Distribution, 15-23 Helles Ave., Moorebank, NSW, 2170
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email: orders@tldistribution.com.au

www.broadviewpress.com

Broadview Press acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP) for our publishing activities.

This book is printed on paper containing 100% post-consumer fibre.



Typesetting and assembly: True to Type Inc., Claremont, Canada.

PRINTED IN CANADA

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Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Marjorie Mather, editor, English Studies, Leonard Conolly, series editor, and the staff at Broadview Press for their assistance and responsiveness. And thanks, too, to Julia Gaunce, formerly of Broadview, who first encouraged me to undertake this project, and to Juliet Sutcliffe for her meticulous copyediting.

I'm indebted to Thomas Chase, Dean of Arts at the University of Regina, for supporting my trip to California and the Yukon in the footsteps of Jack and Buck. I'm grateful as always to Susan Robertson-Krezel and her staff at Interlibrary Loan at the Archer Library, University of Regina. Thanks to the University of Alberta Library for their loan of a 1903 Macmillan first edition of *The Call of the Wild*. The maps in Appendix J were prepared with the expert assistance of Nathan Binns of Printing Services at the University of Regina.

In Sonoma, Rudy Ciuca and Joseph Lawrence were hospitable far beyond the call of duty while I was visiting the Jack London Foundation Research Center. In Skagway, Dyea Dave McClelland got me out of a tight spot and was a memorable companion on the trip over White Pass.

In Dawson City, Michelle Caley at the Tourist Information Centre put me in touch with all the right people. My best wishes to Sarah Lenart and her co-workers at the Bonanza Gold Motel. I enjoyed discussions with Dawne Mitchell, co-curator at the Jack London Centre. And thanks to Laura Mann for opening up the Dawson City Museum especially for me. I was privileged to spend more time with Dick North than either of us expected. Dick showed me where Jack London camped by the Bond cabin and the probable spot where Buck broke out the laden sled. I benefited greatly from his intimate knowledge of the Klondike Trail.

Finally, as one can only build well on strong foundations, I would like to acknowledge the scholars who have preceded me in editing *The Call of the Wild*.

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References and Abbreviations

For readers today familiar with the northwest corner of the North American continent—the “Northland,” as Jack London called it—there are many potential causes of geographical confusion in *The Call of the Wild* and the other texts in the appendices of this volume about the Klondike gold rush. Here are some examples. These texts often refer to the gold-seekers’ destination as “Alaska,” even though the Klondike region was (and is) entirely in Canadian territory. There were no important gold deposits beside the Klondike River itself; these were to be found in the Klondike’s tributary creeks. The Yukon River in 1897 was a shorter waterway than at present, as its upper reaches were then called the Lewes River (though few used this name). The modern Yukon Territory was not organized until mid-1898; in 1897 the Klondike region and the boomtown of Dawson (now Dawson City, YT) were in the Northwest Territories. The spelling of many place-names has changed since Jack London’s year in the Northland: for example, the Alaskan port named “Skaguay” in 1897 had become “Skagway” by 1899, possibly due to a US Post Office registration error.

Cross-references to the text of *The Call of the Wild* in this volume are abbreviated as *CW* followed by page number, e.g., *CW* 63.

Cross-references to the Appendices in this volume usually appear parenthetically, e.g., (Appendices A1, B2), and do not include page numbers.

Quotations from Jack London’s correspondence are taken from the three-volume *The Letters of Jack London*, edited by Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz, III, and I. Milo Shepard (1988). This work is abbreviated *L* followed by volume number, colon, and page number: e.g., *L* 2:837.

Distances on the Klondike Trail mentioned in the narrative of *The Call of the Wild* are usually approximations. More precise modern river distances given in the footnotes to the text have been estimated from the detailed maps provided in Jennifer Voss’s *Klondike Trail* (see Select Bibliography).

In the footnotes, all conversions of length, weight, and temperature have been rounded to the nearest whole unit.

Abbreviations used in the footnotes

BC = British Columbia

°C = degrees Celsius

cm = centimetre(s)

°F = degrees Fahrenheit

g = gram(s)

kg = kilogram(s)

km = kilometre(s)

m = metre(s)

NWMP = North-West Mounted Police

NWT = Northwest Territories

OED = *Oxford English Dictionary* (online version)

YT = Yukon Territory

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Introduction

In early December 1902, Jack London, 26 years old and a rising literary star on the west coast, sat down to write a 4,000-word “dog story.” Somehow it “got away” from him (Appendix G10), and by late January 1903 had turned into a 31,800-word novella. Shortened by 5,000 words, this first saw print between 20 June and 18 July 1903 as a five-part illustrated serial in the weekly *Saturday Evening Post*. Immediately thereafter, restored to its original length and padded out with more illustrations, it was published by Macmillan as a novel priced at \$1.50. Few complained that they had not received value for money; on the contrary, reviewers praised every aspect of the volume, including its “get-up” (Appendices G16, H6). *The Call of the Wild* sold 10,000 copies on its first day of issue, entered the best-seller list by the end of 1903, made Jack London’s international reputation, and would quickly be hailed as a masterpiece, “the greatest dog-story ever written” (Sandburg 29). By 1910 its title had become “a phrase in the English language” (Appendix G21), and five years later Jack London could refer to his dog story without presumption as “a text book, and a classic” (Appendix G23).

More than a century after its first publication, *The Call of the Wild* is as popular as ever as textbook and classic. The standard book-trade database lists more than seventy editions in English currently in print in the USA. There are also e-book and audio-book versions on CD and as downloads; there are graphic-novel versions for adults and comic-book versions for children; there are large-print and Braille versions; and there are versions for slow readers, for bookworms, and for learners of English speaking forty-eight different languages, from Afrikaans to Wolof. Innumerable versions of the text are freely available on the internet. The first of many film adaptations appeared in 1908; the most recent, in 3D, appeared in 2009. A search for “Call of the Wild” in combination with “Jack London” on the largest US online retailer of books generates more than 600 results, while a similar trawl on the most popular internet search engine generates about half a million hits.

A new edition of *The Call of the Wild* should offer something different from what is already available. Moreover, as most book versions for adult readers today include one or more of London’s other dog stories, to publish the novella as a stand-alone volume requires justification. This edition is not the only one intended for

the university classroom, but it differs from the others in aim and method: it will try to explain how the novella came to be written, why it was so successful, and why it remains important. To do so, it will provide material that illuminates the context from which the 1903 Macmillan first edition emerged. As this context is very complex, just sketching it out takes more space than the novella itself.

Good works of literature admit of a variety of interpretations; with great works, these interpretations seem inexhaustible. Unlike many other great works, however, *The Call of the Wild* does not seem to most casual adult readers to be particularly complex, and some might feel insulted if offered professional help to understand it. Even leading Jack London scholars concede that it is “an easy read” (Labor and Leitz xii).¹ Its deemed suitability for children comes from the supposition that it has just two complementary meanings. First, it is an exciting yarn written in simple language about a dog who, torn unexpectedly from his home comforts, triumphantly adapts to living in the wild. Second, it is a beast fable sending the clear and positive message to young people that they will meet adversity in life but can successfully surmount it if they try hard enough. Both readings make it suitable for use as a set text in schools.

More careful readers, on the other hand, may notice that there are contradictions in *The Call of the Wild* that belie its reputation for transparency. For example, “mongrel” is a disfavoured term in the text:² the two dogs so described are spiritless and clueless (*CW* 96). Yet the canine protagonist Buck, a paradigm of heroic doghood, is a mongrel himself, in that his parents are of quite different breeds.³ Furthermore, the keynote of *The Call of the Wild* is atavism, or reversion to an ancestral and more primitive state—a dog “turns back” into a wolf (see Appendices E4, E5, G20). Atavistic reversion has always had pejorative connotations, and in Jack London’s time atavism was considered the leading explanation for criminality. Yet Buck’s final metamorphosis into a wild creature is not described in negative terms at all. So in what sense is it atavism?

Academic critics have drawn attention to deeper paradoxes. The plot strongly suggests that Buck “must learn to be wild”

1 Too easy, perhaps, to gain the academic community’s respect: see Labor, “Jack London’s *Mondo Cane*” 114.

2 And in London’s other writings: e.g., “God abhors a mongrel” (*L* 3:1533).

3 Noted by Foner 54; see Mann 1 for some possible implications.

(Auerbach 91), surely a contradiction in terms. Moreover, Buck can only fully respond to the call of the wild once his beloved master John Thornton is dead. Is London suggesting by this that love is an impediment to the full attainment of selfhood?¹ If this is so, is the truest mark of Buck's liberation that he finally kills men, "the noblest game of all" (*CW* 129)? Or should our identification with Buck be limited by our awareness that he is a dog, not a man, and therefore his fate will have no direct bearing on our own? But what then becomes of the school textbook reading of the novella as a beast fable? Some critics have resolved these issues by concluding that, actually, *The Call of the Wild* is as flawed as the man who wrote it.²

Jack London was a seriously flawed human being (and a truly fascinating one), and his great novella does have many autobiographical elements. But in this edition I will operate from the premise that what strikes the vast majority of readers of *The Call of the Wild* today is its tremendous vitality; if it has major flaws, they are not obvious. Of course it is interesting to learn that Jack London was as human as the rest of us; but what is more interesting is how this frail mortal came to write a masterpiece that would outlive him, and will outlive us. This edition will try to show how London in *The Call of the Wild* was able to dramatize the contradictions in his nature, and probably in all human nature, in a way that is aesthetically successful—even though these contradictions remained unresolved.

According to his daughter, London thought that *The Call of the Wild* was an unintentional masterpiece, "a lucky shot in the dark that had unexpectedly found its mark" (Joan London 252). I think a different metaphor would be more apt: the seemingly spontaneous flower bloomed from a fertile, well-prepared bed of evolutionary thought. Moreover, while London may not have known exactly what he was doing while composing *The Call of the Wild*, after it was finished he certainly knew that he had achieved something unique. "It is an animal story, utterly different in subject & treatment from the rest of the animal stories which have been so successful," he wrote to his publisher only a couple of weeks after mailing off the completed manuscript (Appendix G7). It will be another of the aims of this edition to try to explain how *The Call of the Wild* was "utterly different"

1 See also Spinner 77, Woodward 61.

2 Frey comes to a subtler conclusion: the many "teasing" contradictions are a key to the novella's "wide and lasting appeal" (37).

from comparable works, and why that difference might be a key to its greatness.

Jack London: A Brief Biography

Jack London was born in 1876 in San Francisco, California—in the USA’s centennial year and in what was then its western metropolis. At his birth, the USA, far from having attained the tranquillity of maturity, was moving from the political instability of the Reconstruction Era into the dog-eat-dog socio-economic ethos of the Gilded Age. As London grew up, the nation fell into the hands of the “robber barons,” who, thanks to an unregulated marketplace, were amassing unprecedented personal fortunes by forming trusts, cornering commodities, and exploiting the labour of men, women, and children.

At the same time, between the completion of the transcontinental railroad (1869) and the final suppression of the Plains Indians (1890), the western frontier was ceasing to function as a real location on the boundary between civilization and wilderness, and instead mutating into a romantic legend: into the Wild West as depicted in Buffalo Bill’s famous show (from 1883). Though Jack London’s literary career flourished during the reformist Progressive Era after the turn of the twentieth century, his worldview was profoundly shaped by the harsh economic inequities of the last decade of the nineteenth, and his restlessness was that of the far westerner unreconciled to the disappearance of the frontier.

London’s family background was unprivileged, his upbringing relatively deprived, and his formal education rudimentary. But he would earn (and spend) probably more than any other previous writer in history.¹ After the huge commercial successes of *The Call of the Wild*² and his next novel *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), he would become the first celebrity author of the twentieth century. But his material achievements hardly confirmed the validity of the popular dime novels by Horatio Alger, Jr.—young Jack had read them avidly—promising young men of lowly backgrounds that by

1 According to Kingman, he “ran about one million dollars” through his bank account, though he never had more than \$28,000 in it (*Pictorial Biography* 91).

2 London sold the novel rights to *The Call of the Wild* outright to Macmillan for \$2,000, a handsome sum but only a tiny fraction of what he might subsequently have earned from royalties (see Appendix G23).

honest diligence they would rise to prosperity and marry their bosses' daughters. In the course of his early struggles, he did try the Alger rags-to-riches prescription, only to discover that this formulation of the American dream was a cruel illusion.

London was born out of wedlock. His mother Flora Wellman (1843–1922) came from a wealthy Ohio background, but she had cut her family ties and had fallen to a social sphere far below that of her birth. His father was almost certainly the wandering astrologer “Professor” William Henry Chaney (1821–1903), who in 1875 briefly lived in a common-law relationship with Flora, abandoning her once her pregnancy was confirmed and never admitting paternity. The self-dramatizing Flora, whose talents included spiritualism and piano teaching, was not a maternal woman. But Jack was not an entirely neglected child. He was nurtured literally and figuratively by an African-American wet-nurse, Jennie Prentiss. He would also be close to his stepfather John London (1828–97), a widowed farmer and Civil War veteran who, needing a mother for his two daughters, had made an honest woman of Flora nine months after Jack's birth. And the older of John's daughters, Eliza, took a sisterly interest in the boy, who may not have known for certain that he was illegitimate until he was 21.

Jack's early years were spent moving from one location to another around San Francisco Bay, as the hard-working but sickly John London struggled to make a living, often hampered by the demanding and injudicious Flora. Oakland, San Francisco's smaller, less cosmopolitan neighbour a short ferry ride across the Bay, became the London family's adopted home town. It was under the aegis of Oakland's remarkable librarian-poet Ina Coolbrith (1841–1928) at the public library that the young Jack first gained full access to the world of books. The boy was a voracious and precocious reader, of the kind who reads to escape from both external squalor and internal dissatisfaction.

Another form of escape was provided by the Bay itself. Young Jack, risk-seeking by nature, taught himself to sail, and plied its treacherous waters to test his courage and forget his problems. He graduated from eighth grade in 1891, and then had to leave school to work full-time to supplement the family's meagre income. Repetitive, atrociously paid labour in a cannery was a nightmare for the highly intelligent, easily bored boy, and the Bay became a way out of this dead end. Having purchased a sloop, London became what he romantically termed an oyster pirate: he looted the shellfish from commercial beds by night and sold them

to market dealers by day, a form of burglary both lucrative and thrillingly dangerous.¹

In 1893, at 17, he made his first major ocean voyage, as a common sailor on a sealing vessel to the North Pacific, an episode that would later form the basis of *The Sea-Wolf*. This eight-month trip also inspired his first success as a writer: on his return he won a \$25 prize and newspaper publication in the *San Francisco Morning Call* for a descriptive essay based on his experiences during a typhoon off the Japanese coast. The following year, strapping young Jack made his Alger experiment by starting at the bottom at an electric plant, only to discover that he had been hired at \$30 per month to replace two coal haulers who had each earned \$40. He would ruin his health before solving his family's financial problems or marrying the boss's daughter. He quit to join the western detachment of Coxey's Industrial Army, a workers' march on Washington to protest conditions during the economic slump, the worst in American history, that had begun with the Panic of 1893.

Soon bored with this ill-organized demonstration, he deserted in the Midwest and took up the life of a hobo, hopping trains to explore the Eastern cities. Minding his own business in Niagara Falls, New York, he was arrested for vagrancy and, without a trace of due judicial process, was jailed for thirty days. If his tramping had made him a fictional realist—see *The Road* (1907)—his arbitrary imprisonment became a watershed in his political consciousness, as he recalled in his essay “How I Became a Socialist” (1903).² Turning to books—including works by the revolutionary socialists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and the radical economist Henry George—as a means of understanding what had happened to him and to America, he discovered that, no matter what the US Constitution declared, he had no rights because as an individual proletarian he had no effective political power. Moreover, his youthful vigour as a “work-beast” (*John Barleycorn* 63) would be ruthlessly exploited by his capitalist masters until he was worn out and consigned to the scrapheap. Henceforth he resolved that he would become a socialist, working actively in solidarity with his peers to usher in a revolution that would transform the American political system. In the meantime he would make his living as “a vender of brains” (“What Life Means to Me” 301), which wore out more slowly than muscle.

1 As he put it in 1906, “It was robbery, I grant, but it was precisely the spirit of capitalism” (“What Life Means to Me” 296).

2 See also *The Road* 77.

Now convinced of the value of education, he returned to high school in Oakland and then attended a crammer to prepare for entrance to the University of California. But one semester at Berkeley overtaxed both his financial resources and his patience with academia. His first love affair with the delicate middle-class maiden Mabel Applegarth was doomed by differences of class, temperament, and ideology. Meanwhile he became briefly notorious as Oakland's Boy Socialist who mounted soapboxes to preach violent revolution. Regardless of his high-minded resolution to live by his brain, however, his family's bills had to be paid; he found himself sweating in the steam laundry of a private school, washing and ironing the staff's clothing for the inevitable \$30 per month.

Then on 14 July 1897 the steamer *Excelsior* docked in San Francisco harbour and Klondike gold miners staggered on shore, weighed down with three quarters of a million dollars in dust and nuggets. The greatest gold rush in history was on (Appendix A1). Propelled by a double incentive—to strike out for the new frontier and to strike it rich—Jack was one of the first wave of stampedeers to embark for the Northland. One of tens of thousands caught in the grip of “Klondicitis,” he persuaded his stepsister Eliza to grubstake him from her savings and two weeks later he was on his way.

His Klondike adventure lasted about a year. Barely surviving a serious case of scurvy, he returned to Oakland with about \$4.50 in gold dust.¹ Yet the Northland would thereafter serve as his mother lode. As Franklin Walker notes, “The Klondike rush was at the heart of the fiction which made him famous” (213), and he continued to exploit it profitably until the end of his life. But metaphors of exploitation belittle London's achievement. By late 1898, the Klondike was old news (see *L* 1:18, note 2) so he had to create a readership for his Northland tales. He did so by mythologizing the unpromising subarctic wilderness, transforming it into an arena for exciting conflicts that at the same time offered new insights into the origin and evolution of human nature. In the Klondike he found himself and his characteristic theme as a writer (see Joan London 146).

His stepfather had died while he was in the Klondike, and now his family needed Jack's financial support more than ever. He began submitting fiction to periodicals with a feverish energy

1 A quarter-ounce (7 g) of gold was then worth about \$4.00 (Berton 43).

and within six months had received his first acceptances.¹ A year later his story “An Odyssey of the North” appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*, the most prestigious American periodical, and on 7 April 1900 his first book, *The Son of the Wolf: Tales of the Far North*, was published by the distinguished Boston company Houghton Mifflin. On that same day, London married Elizabeth (“Bessie”) Maddern (1876–1947) after a rapid courtship. Having concluded that his love affair with Anna Strunsky (1879–1964), a Russian-Jewish socialist intellectual, would remain unconsummated due to cultural and temperamental differences, he arranged a rational, eugenic union with a woman fit to provide him with sturdy sons. In the next two and a half years Bessie kept only part of the bargain, bearing two daughters while falling in love with her husband. In the meantime Jack published two more collections of Northland tales and his first novel, *A Daughter of the Snows* (1902), but failed to reciprocate Bessie’s deepening affection.

By mid-1902 he had built a national reputation as the Kipling of the Klondike. Six weeks disguised as a down-on-his-luck American sailor in the teeming squalor of London’s East End gave him the material for his powerful sociological exposé *The People of the Abyss* (1903). On his return from England he wrote *The Call of the Wild* and signed a long-term contract with the publisher George Brett of Macmillan, that would last, with one stutter, to the end of his life. At the same time, his personal life started to unravel. As *The Call of the Wild* was being serialized, he fell in love with Charmian Kittredge (1871–1955) and abruptly left his wife for her. Supporting at least two households from that moment on, he would in 1905 also take on the ever-increasing expense of the Beauty Ranch near Glen Ellen in the Sonoma Valley north of San Francisco.

While his land purchases in the Valley of the Moon indicated his yearning for stability and rootedness, his wanderlust was far from appeased. In adventure-seeking he was matched by Charmian, whom he married the day after his divorce from Bessie was finalized. The couple made plans to circumnavigate the globe, taking a leisurely seven years in a ketch constructed for the purpose. But the *Snark* was built in the immediate aftermath of the devastating 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, when

1 The first publication of a short story by London had actually occurred without his knowledge in *Owl* (September 1897) while he was in the Klondike (Kingman, *Pictorial Biography* 88).

labour was costly and materials had to be shipped in at great expense from the East. London impatiently squandered tens of thousands of dollars on the *Snark*, yet the vessel was poorly designed, badly constructed, and incompetently manned. The voyage, which irreparably damaged London's health, had to be abandoned after only two years.

Though London in mid-career supposedly wrote only for money to cover his ever-increasing debts, he still produced four major works in different fictional genres. The novel-length "dog story" *White Fang* (1906), a deliberate inversion of *The Call of the Wild*, recounts how a savage wolf-dog is tamed by human love. The prehistoric novel *Before Adam* (1907) rewrites the biblical account of man's origin in the light of the new science of paleo-anthropology.¹ *The Iron Heel* (1908) is a dystopian novel predicting that the American socialist movement, once it started to endanger the status quo, would be ruthlessly suppressed by a capitalist oligarchy. The realistic bildungsroman *Martin Eden* (1909), completed in spite of the tribulations aboard the *Snark*, is a brilliant semi-autobiographical account of a disadvantaged young writer's struggles to get published.

If London's middle years were marred by fiasco, his last ones were darkened by tragedy. In 1910 his and Charmian's daughter Joy died two days after birth, and two years later Charmian suffered a miscarriage; they would never raise the sons that Jack craved. As his health worsened, his alcohol consumption increased, generating a downward spiral. His energy and creative imagination were now channelled into trying to turn Beauty Ranch into a model farm based on agricultural and ecological ideas too far ahead of their time. This enterprise and the construction of a grandiose dream home, Wolf House, exhausted money faster than his pen was able to earn it. The destruction by fire of Wolf House in 1913, shortly before he and Charmian were due to move in, was a bitter blow. Yet even this period, when he might have been expected only to hack out potboilers, saw the publication of some important works. They include his frank alcoholic memoir *John Barleycorn* (1913), and the unnerving fantasy *The Star Rover* (1915), in which a convict on death row escapes the monstrous inhumanity of the penal system by astral travel into past ages.

London was robustly built, and even as teenager could hold his own in dockside brawls. His aggressive boasting about his

1 See Ruddick 43–47, etc., for a fuller discussion of London's prehistoric fiction.

physical prowess began partly as a way of contrasting himself with his sickly stepfather, and partly because of the fear that the hard-living men among whom he lived would despise him for being a sensitive bookworm. Early in life he was drinking heavily, and at fifteen almost drowned after recklessly swimming out to sea after a binge. Though he would claim that he was not innately an alcoholic, he certainly became one. Years of alcohol abuse, together with a delusional confidence in the indestructibility of his splendid organism, were major contributors to the breakdown of his health and premature death at forty. Though he may not actually have intended to kill himself on 22 November 1916, his lifestyle had bordered on the suicidal for the previous 25 years.

Jack London's unprecedented wealth and celebrity aroused envy among his contemporary writers of every political stripe. His wilful immaturity and self-destructive temperament still evoke sneers among well-disposed biographers. His enormous popularity (always based on a fraction of his oeuvre) and his frequent insistence that he only wrote for money make it difficult for many academic critics to take his work seriously, especially in light of the selfless devotion to their art professed by his modernist contemporaries. His rabble-rousing socialism, though latterly conducted from an armchair, always went against the American grain, as he intended it to. To his brothers-in-arms, his withdrawal from the public arena after 1905 made his characteristic valediction, "Yours for the Revolution," seem like hypocritical posturing.

Today, however, Jack London is likelier to be condemned as a racist, sexist, or imperialist for his many pronouncements, drunk and sober, about the superiority of white skin, the inferiority of women, and the inevitable triumph of Anglo-Saxon values. (There is, however, plenty of counter-evidence suggesting that he was subject to fewer prejudices on these issues than most intellectuals of his time.) Current cultural arbiters, if they do not dismiss him entirely, are prepared to invoke him only to contrast the incorrectness of his views with their own enlightened ones. In so doing, they ignore Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin's salutary reminder that, taken as a whole, Jack London's work explores as objectively as possible "the human fact, in all its aspects, both beautiful and ugly" (*Call* 9). However, for many who prefer not to see the bigger picture, Jack London's name is still tainted with illegitimacy.

London enjoyed the riches and prestige that capitalism showered upon him. But he was unashamed of his proletarian origins

and his work drew strength from his outsider status. Though largely self-educated, he was very widely read, and in his prime he was one of the most formidable intellects of his time. His best work is that of a deliberate artist, and is characterized by a profoundly adversary relationship to the values of the society that had unwillingly produced him. In this, such twentieth-century masters as D.H. Lawrence, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Jack Kerouac, and Norman Mailer are his heirs (see McClintock 95).

London wrote fifty books (including seven published posthumously) in a writing career of eighteen years, and most of this large oeuvre is still both highly readable and interesting. His published body of letters constitutes in itself a major document about the literary profession. For the better part of the twentieth century he was “the most widely read and most translated of all American authors” (Woodbridge 10). He rose above his lowly, unpromising origins like an irresistible force of nature. Indeed, his literary career and achievement confirm his own axiom: “Genius is irresistible; it casts aside all shackles and restraints; it cannot be held down” (“On the Writer’s Philosophy of Life” 7). He was also his own worst enemy, but time will surely forgive him that indiscretion. He bestrides the American cultural scene from 1900 to the First World War.

Sources of *The Call of the Wild: Dogs and Other Animals*

The world’s greatest dog story has its origins in Jack London’s lifelong love for dogs. Charmian’s biography *The Book of Jack London* (1921) includes photographs of three of Jack’s dogs: his boyhood chum Rollo in about 1885; Brown Wolf, his Alaskan husky at Glen Ellen in 1905; and Peggy, the fox terrier who accompanied the *Snark* in 1909. In *The Road* London tells an anecdote about Punch, a dog he owned when he was “a very little lad” (54); and in “The Other Animals” (see below) he mentions Glen, a husky/mountain shepherd cross, that he owned as an adult in Oakland. Possum, another fox terrier, was Jack’s constant companion in the last four years of his life (O’Connor 329), and after Jack’s death is reputed to have drowned himself from grief.¹ London treated dogs with respect rather than condescension. “Most people ... pat, caress, and talk in more or less affec-

1 Brown Wolf and Possum both appear under their own names in fiction by London.

tionate terms to a dog. London did none of this. He always spoke and acted toward the dog as if he recognized his noble qualities, respected them, but took them as a matter of course" (Warner 378).

In 1907 London was accused by President Theodore Roosevelt of being a "nature faker," that is, a writer who shamelessly anthropomorphised animals (Clark 772; Roosevelt 427).¹ He responded with the essay "The Other Animals" (1908) in which he recalled his boyhood games with Rollo in detail. These anecdotes, based on careful observation of canine behaviour, plausibly supported his contention that Rollo, far from being an automaton controlled by instincts, could not only reason, but also feel shame when duped by his master, and delight when he contrived to fool his master in turn. London reminds us that, animals ourselves, we should feel no shame in acknowledging the "other animals" as our close relatives (265). Further, he implies that Roosevelt was in denial about the profound continuity between ourselves and the animal kingdom established by evolutionary science. The president, whose views were "distinctly mediaeval" and "homocentric" (240), evidently wanted humanity to retain the "dominion" over animals that God had supposedly authorized (Genesis 1:26).

While London probably did not travel any great distance by dogsled while in the Klondike, he could hardly have avoided the many "inside" dogs (native breeds such as the husky and malamute) and "outside" dogs (imported breeds) that made human life in the northern winter possible (Appendices D1, D2, D3).² His model for Buck was Jack,³ a St. Bernard/Scotch (or German) shepherd cross, one of two outside dogs owned by Louis Bond, the Californian near whose Dawson cabin London camped in October 1897. The name "Buck," similar enough to "Jack" to suggest the close identification that the author felt for his canine protagonist, was chosen for the strength in its simplicity (Appendix G17). As Mason in London's famous Klondike story "The White Silence" (1899) asserts, "I never saw a dog with a highfalutin' name that ever was worth a rap" (1). Though Buck is an outside dog, his name suggests the "aboriginal" animal mas-

1 In 1981 James Dickey renewed this accusation (12).

2 Dogs could haul supplies over deep snow that horses would sink into. See Walker 147–48 on London's likely encounters with dogs in the Yukon.

3 See Appendix G18; Walker 119; North 54–55.

culinity that he will eventually rediscover: whites often referred to Native men in the Northland as “bucks,” a term that was not entirely derogatory (see Auerbach 85).

There is only one canine protagonist in London’s Klondike fiction before *The Call of the Wild* (Appendix F), but dogs are ubiquitous in supporting roles. In these early stories inside dogs are referred to in ways that emphasize their difference from soft Southland dogs: they are called “wolf-dogs” in “The God of His Fathers” (1901) (16); “tame wolves” in “Siwash” (1901) (108); and “Hudson Bay dogs” in “Li Wan, the Fair” (1902) (201). The inside dogs’ wolflike appearance and perpetual hunger reflect the harsh lives of their “savage” owners. In “The Sunlanders” (1902) the aboriginals consider short-haired outside dogs good only for eating. However, in “The League of the Old Men” (1902) the Indians are amazed when, properly fed instead of half-starved, an outside dog proves to be a formidable fighter. Other outside dogs in London’s early fiction more directly foreshadow Buck: for example, in “Where The Trail Forks” (1900), a shepherd dog whose owners have been killed goes off into the wild and breeds successfully with wolves.

In London’s Klondike fiction, awareness of the behavioural continuum between dog and man is a sign of perspicacity, as with Mrs. Eppingwell in “The Scorn of Women” (1901) who “could comprehend certain primal and analogous characteristics in a hungry wolf-dog or a starving man, and predicate lines of action to be pursued by either under like conditions” (265–66). Gratuitous cruelty to dogs is a sign of serious moral weakness. Mason in “The White Silence” is no monster, but he commits an unforgivable sin when he takes out his frustrations on Carmen, the weakest of his suffering sled dogs. Mason is felled by a seemingly random accident, but he knows that by inflicting unnecessary pain on a fellow creature he has called Nemesis down upon himself, and apologizes for his transgression with his last breath. The man in the red sweater hurts Buck much more than Mason hurts Carmen, but the beating of Buck is for the higher purpose of improving his chances of survival as an outside dog on the Klondike Trail.

One canine motif recurs almost obsessively in London’s early fiction: the howling of wolf-dogs under the Northern Lights. In “A Daughter of the Aurora” (1899) they howl from blind instinct (214). In “The Scorn of Women” their “pitiful chorus” (284) expresses existential pain, but in their appeal to the indifferent heavens they are as deluded as humans. In “The Wife of a King”

(1899), erotic and mysterious elements abound: the aurora is “a gorgeous wanton” and the dogs’ “weird song” to it is “the first and greatest secret of the Northland” (179). In *A Daughter of the Snows* the aurora climaxes orgasmically overhead as the wolf-dogs “in long-drawn unisoned howls, sobbed their dismay and grief” (187). London must have often overheard this canine canticle in the Northland and, associating it with both sex and death, at once alluring and admonitory, resolved to tease out its occult significance (see Appendix D3). By the time Buck first hears huskies serenade the aurora at Dawson (*CW* 79), the song has come to signify above all the domesticated creature’s yearning for its wild heritage.

Two other early works, neither to do with dogs or the Klondike, have an important indirect bearing on *The Call of the Wild*. *The Kempton-Wace Letters* (1903), co-written by London and Anna Strunsky between September 1900 and July 1902 and published anonymously, is an epistolary dialogue about love and marriage. In it Herbert Wace (London’s alter ego), a young economist soon to be wed, argues for mating on rational principles while his foster-father Dane Kempton (Strunsky’s mouthpiece) makes the case for romantic love. Though Kempton ultimately wins the argument (insofar as Wace’s fiancée breaks off the engagement when she realizes he does not love her), it is Wace’s argument that is the more passionate. In his view, romantic love is a belated, unnatural mutation of the ancient imperative to reproduce the species.

Wace believes that the past two millennia of culture are a thin veneer over the Paleolithic ages when human mating habits were formed. He “knows” this from having travelled back in his imagination to prehistoric times. Considering himself a man of the future who seeks to be truly civilized, he plans to avoid both “the archaic sex madness of the beast,” and its more recent incarnation, “the obsolescent romance madness of latter-day man” (178). Instead, he will make a healthy, sane, intellectually and biologically justified choice of a mate. (Of course, he will find himself ultimately alone.)

Evidently, London suspected that “the archaic sex madness of the beast” was more authentic than romantic love, in that it was without illusions. Perhaps after marrying Bessie Maddern for rational reasons, he discovered that the archaic sex madness still raged in himself. Then, after experiencing the squalor and despair of the East End of London, he probably decided that civilization was a thinner veneer than he had previously imagined. What was

then the greatest city in the world ought to demonstrate civilization at its highest development. Yet he concluded *The People of the Abyss* (composed during August and September 1902): “the men of Civilization live worse than the beasts, and have less to eat and wear and protect them from the elements than the savage Innuits [*sic*] in a frigid climate who lives to-day as he lived in the stone age ten thousand years ago” (317).

In other words, London, just before sitting down to write *The Call of the Wild* (composed 1 December 1902 to late January 1903), had come to the conclusion that modern civilization was an unnatural sham, and the life of a savage or a beast was preferable. Wild creatures must perpetually struggle to survive against indifferent Nature, but at least they do not have to suffer the degradation of the urban poor and sick, who are confined to “a sort of unacknowledged concentration camp for the financially unfit” (Geismar 159) and left to die. London realized that not even an inadequately civilized product such as himself could literally go back to innocent, noble savagery or pure, unthinking animality. But perhaps by harking back in his imagination he could peel off the domesticated veneer and expose the more authentic wild self. Romantic love, the sex-madness of the civilized, would be the last layer to be stripped off. But how to dramatize in positive terms a reversion to the beast?

The French novelist Émile Zola (1840–1902) was notorious for his novels in which his characters turned into human beasts. In *La Bête Humaine* (1890), for example, the pressures of modern life acting upon a poisoned heredity bring about the protagonist’s atavistic reversion into a sex-murderer.¹ Zola’s American follower Frank Norris (1870–1902) had produced in *McTeague* (1899) a novel about the degeneration of a San Francisco dentist, something close to a masterpiece in a similar vein. In these so-called naturalistic novels, the plot developed according to a grim quasi-Darwinian logic. As our heritage was animal, when bad heredity was compounded by environmental factors such as poverty or alcoholism, a lower creature (a predatory ape or carnivore) buried in us could emerge and take us over, body and mind. Naturalistic novels were strongly deterministic: their characters were the puppets of hereditary and socio-economic forces far too powerful for any individual to resist.

Both Zola and Norris died in the fall of 1902, and London

1 For Zola’s influence on American naturalism in general and London in particular, see Tavernier-Courbin, *Call* 12–19.

may well have had their examples in mind as he began to compose *The Call of the Wild*. But his concern in December 1902 was to dramatize a scenario that was the inverse of the typical naturalistic one. He wished to *liberate* the caged animal within,¹ then coach it in how to be wild, and then release it to live a more natural life in the woods. This restoration to Nature's bosom, so to speak, is essentially a romantic idea,² not a naturalistic one. At the same time, London, who wrote to earn a living, was constrained by the prudery of the US cultural marketplace compared, say, with Zola's France.³ American publishers, like their British counterparts, were often craven in their deference to "Mrs. Grundy," the personification of bourgeois propriety.

In January 1902 London had written a Klondike story, one of the best of his early career, provocatively entitled "Bâtard" (Appendix F). Its eponymous protagonist is an inside wolf-dog, and it has a conventionally naturalistic theme: perhaps the French title was a nod to Zola. Bâtard inherits ugly qualities from both his parents, but it is only after long provocation that he takes a startling revenge on Leclère, his gratuitously cruel master. Given his own background, London may have been trying to suggest in this story that a cruel upbringing was a greater source of evil than illegitimacy and bad heredity combined. "I have always been impressed with the awful plasticity of life," he noted to an interviewer, "and I feel that I can never lay enough stress upon the marvelous power and influence of environment" (James 382). The "environment" that plays upon Bâtard's tainted heredity is Leclère, a human beast worse than any wolf-dog, whose close identification with Bâtard expresses itself sadistically.

But by the end of 1902, the dog story that London wanted to write was one very different from "Bâtard." In the light of his disillusioning experience in the East End, the canine protagonist must now embody a positive liberation not only from dependency on man, but also from the human world entirely.⁴ For this purpose he needed an outside dog, one who at the start of the story was as comfortably domesticated as possible. He remembered that, in the Yukon, when the wolf-dogs howled at the aurora, the outside dogs quickly rediscovered their wolf-voices.

1 See Feldman 161–80 on the cultural significance of this metaphor.

2 For *The Call of the Wild* as a romantic novel, see Tavernier-Courbin, *Call* 96–109.

3 Though privately outspoken on sexual matters, London self-censored or bowdlerized many of his works to maximize his readership.

4 See also Joan London 252–53.

Their nocturnal reversion to ancestral behaviour suggested how shallow domestication was. The dog was simply a wolf that had been confined to a mental cage by man; the wolf, vilified in fairy tales as a ravaging beast, was the authentic creature. The howling dogs of the Northland reminded London of his own sense of inauthenticity under civilized conditions. His identification with dogs was very strong—he loved them and treated them as equals. The new outside dog protagonist would be his surrogate. While Bâtard's ancestry worked against him, this new protagonist would be a superior blend of breeds (Appendix D1): he would be a hybrid, not a mongrel. And his unique endowment would allow him to escape from the mental cage of domesticity and attain authentic wolfhood, making the return journey to the wild that was no longer possible for a man, except in imagination.¹

Darwinism and Dogs

Buck has been called a “Nietzschean hound” (Kazin 116), and by 1902 London had been exposed to the German philosopher's ideas:² the “dominant primordial beast” (*CW* 71) certainly sounds like a canine version of the Nietzschean *Übermensch* (Superman). However, London associated the Superman with excessively individualistic, antisocial qualities, like those exhibited by Wolf Larsen in *The Sea-Wolf*. Buck, on the other hand, though he transfers his affections from humanity to the wolf-pack, remains a social and sympathetic creature right to the end of *The Call of the Wild*. The key to understanding how Buck's character is formed and why we identify with him is not in the philosophy of the German “madman”—as London's alter ego Martin Eden comes to think of Nietzsche (408)—but in the scientific theories of the greatest Victorian naturalist as well as in the more dubious hypotheses of his disciples.

The young Jack London, seeking a philosophy of life, had turned to Herbert Spencer (see *L* 1:103-04), the Victorian evolutionary thinker who had tried to reconcile philosophy and science

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- 1 Edison Marshall's novel *Ogden's Strange Story* (1934) is an ingenious variation upon *The Call of the Wild*: the human protagonist atavistically reverts to a prehistoric man after he alone survives a plane crash in the Northland.
 - 2 E.g., he refers to “the blond beasts of Neitzsche” [sic] in his essay “Rods and Gunnels” of August 1902 (544); however, he did not read Nietzsche thoroughly until after composing *The Call of the Wild* (see *L* 1:446).

through a “law” stating that all development, sociological and biological, moved inevitably from simple homogeneity to complex heterogeneity and so was always progressive. But as London deepened his reading in evolutionary theory, Spencer’s progressionism must have come to seem inadequate in at least two ways. It could not explain how many organisms adapt and thrive by simplifying themselves. And under the misleading rubric “social Darwinism,” it had been adopted by the money interest to justify laissez-faire economics and social policy,¹ on the premise that the “unfit” enterprise (or worker) did not survive. London’s experience as a “work-beast” had taught him the fallacies in that theory.

Jack London took Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859) with him to the Klondike. The scientific tract probably seemed a more plausible explanation for what he saw about him than the epic poem’s story about the consequences of human disobedience to the divine will. In the far north existence was a continuous struggle at the best of times,² and the ruthless winnowing of men and animals by natural selection was perpetually in evidence.

As London read more deeply in Darwin, he discovered a fellow dog-lover and keen observer of canine behaviour. In *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* (1868), Darwin argued that most familiar breeds of the domestic dog, notwithstanding their remarkable variety, had descended from wolves (Appendix C1). Indeed, dogs in the far north were regularly interbred with wolves to ensure their survival in a harsh climate, and it was often difficult to tell whether the offspring were dogs or wolves. The wolf and dog were therefore one species, the dog being simply a “civilized” version of the wolf. For London, this truth implied an analogy: the wolf was to the dog what the “savage” was to the civilized man. As you might make a savage out of a civilized man by exiling him to the wild, so you could “turn back” a dog into a wolf.

Apparently reversed or non-progressive evolution was known as atavism. In default of modern genetic theory, Darwin had defined atavism without offering an explanation for it (Appendix E4), but some of his followers were not so cautious. According to the “biogenetic law” of Ernst Haeckel, Germany’s leading evolu-

1 See also Naso 13–34.

2 But London also registered a remarkable amount of mutual aid: see, e.g., his 1902 essay “The Gold Hunters of the North” 193.

tionary biologist (Appendix E2), all organisms in their embryonic development recapitulated the development of their phylum. A fertilized human egg went through the phases of fish, amphibian, reptile, etc., until it eventually became human and was ready to be born. Atavism was a form of arrested development: on occasion a human might be born, as it were, at the ape stage of recapitulation.

In 1902, London's stated philosophical position as a "materialistic monist" (Appendix G2) was precisely aligned with Haeckel's. Moreover, like many of his contemporaries during imperialism's heyday, London believed that Haeckel's ideas explained racial differences. As white men were "obviously" superior to savages, the former must have undergone a further embryonic refinement than the latter, who were closer to the ape. However, a child of white parents might fail to attain this advanced stage *in utero*, or, worse, devolve after birth. The dusky savage underlay every white man as the ape underlay the dusky savage, and environmental conditions could bring these more primitive forms to the surface. Writers familiar with Haeckel or with Cesare Lombroso, the Italian anthropologist who argued that criminality was a symptom of atavism, had produced powerful fictions in which civilized men revealed the ape or savage inside themselves: examples include R.L. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902).

However, for Jack London in 1902, civilization itself had become more of a problem than its abeyance or absence. In this he was aligned with Theodore Roosevelt who, contemplating the disappearance of the American frontier, feared that "those virile qualities necessary to win in the stern strife of actual life" were being lost in the "life of slothful ease" that comes of too much civilization (Nash 80). Under such circumstances, periodic reversion to a harsher existence was a necessary tonic against decadence. After all, didn't the native peoples of the Northland occasionally breed their dogs with wolves to ensure that they did not get too soft (Appendix C1)? This led to atavism, but of the "beneficial" kind—as James R. Giles has put it (15)—because it was eugenic: it conduced to the improvement of the race. And that is probably why O'Hara's poem (Appendix E5) appealed so strongly to London: it preached that "the animal thrill/Lending a zest to life" could and should be recaptured for the sake of spiritual and racial improvement. Significantly, London did not himself refer to the process Buck undergoes in *The Call of the Wild*

as atavism; instead he used the less pejorative term “decivilization” (borrowed from Herbert Spencer).

The Call of the Wild suggests an analogy: over-civilized weakling is to Superman as dog is to wolf. And indeed for Jack London the wolf later became a personal totem animal “fitting for his strenuously cultivated, primitive authorial identity” (Feldman 168). But it is reductive to read *The Call of the Wild* simply as a parable preaching born-again primitiveness. Few readers can resist identifying with Buck at almost every stage of the narrative, and most intensely at those moments when he is an underdog. If the novella’s dominant mode were allegorical, the narrative strategies used to construct a plausible animal point of view would be superfluous. In *The Jungle Books* (1894–95) by Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), when an allegorical level of discourse is foregrounded, as in the story “Mowgli’s Brothers,” the human boy Mowgli focalizes the narrative and converses with animals. But when pleasurable identification with a sympathetic non-human Other is paramount, as in “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi,” the animal protagonist focalizes the narrative and does not speak with humans. This latter case also obtains in *The Call of the Wild*.

Darwinism underwrites London’s ability to get us to identify with Buck. The technique obviously most conducive to reader identification is first-person narrative, as used by Anna Sewall (1820–78) for her equine protagonist in *Black Beauty* (1877). London instead developed a subtler form of focalization in which the third-person narrative yields to free (or very lightly bound) indirect discourse at strategic moments.¹ For example, after Curly is torn apart by inside dogs, the narrator reports Buck’s thoughts thus: “So that was the way. No fair play. Once down, that was the end of you” (CW 64). Such a technique is authorized by one of Darwinism’s profoundest insights: there is full continuity between the animal and human worlds, to the extent that psychological differences between “higher” animals and ourselves are only “of degree and not of kind” (Appendix C2). Via a narrative that allowed slippage from human into canine perception at key moments, London was able to dramatize this continuity.

In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) Darwin suggested that the panoply of human emotions, including jealousy, anger, pride, and love, were shared by animals. He often used observations of canine behaviour to argue his position,

1 See also Pease 24–31.

noting, for example, that dogs share some facial expressions with us and have adapted their behaviour so that they can communicate better with us. Barking (which tamed wolves can learn and which dogs give up when they become feral) was probably an adaptation to life under the control of a species that communicates by speech (Appendix C3).

Having had his own observations of canine behaviour confirmed by the highest scientific authority, London felt confident that his readers could identify as closely with a sympathetic canine as with a human protagonist. Like dogs, we are warm-blooded social predators, and our two species have lived together for millennia and learned to understand one another well. Higher-order creatures such as dogs and ourselves needed not only endurance and combativeness but also intelligence, even imagination (see *CW* 83), to adapt to ever-changing social and environmental circumstances.

London's Darwinian perspective is what separates *The Call of the Wild* from earlier animal tales. Kipling was a keen observer of animal behaviour, but for him the human and animal realms remained distinct—except when the narrative moved out of the realistic into a fantastic mode such as beast fable or parable. The wolves who impart the Law of the Jungle to the lost child Mowgli are humans in wolf-skins teaching him human ethics *in loco parentis*, and when Mowgli has learned his lesson, he is ready to rejoin his own kind in the real world.¹ But for Jack London the real “Law of the Jungle” was the Darwinian struggle for existence. He called it “The Law of Life” in his 1901 story of that name, while in *The Call of the Wild* it is more harshly designated “The Law of Club and Fang” (*CW* 63), but both designations indicate that it applies equally to humans and other animals. While Kipling upheld the homocentric creation scenario in *Genesis*, for London the kinship between ourselves and animals ran deeper than mere ethological (i.e., behavioural) parallels.

Ernst Haeckel had deliberately shocked his readers by claiming that at one uterine stage, human and dog embryos are almost identical (1:190; 2:194). Jack London had evidently pondered the implications of this observation for our relationship with our oldest and closest animal friend. Might we remember back to some lost aeon when we *were* dogs or wolves? Could we not at least recall the long ages when the wolf accompanied our Paleolithic ancestors as an equal hunting partner? If not, then surely

1 See also Watson 37.

we could imagine what the world might be like from a canine perspective, if only because a dog's perceptions would largely mirror our own. At the same time, a dog's worldview would be simpler, and to represent it effectively would allow the fundamental truth of our shared animal heritage to be made plain.

In *The Call of the Wild*, canine heredity (and, by implication, our own) is a function of "organic" or "ancestral" memory (Appendices E1, E3). Post-Darwinian thinkers proposed that instincts began as actual memories containing important messages about survival. Because of their potency, these memories were imprinted organically on the minds¹ of those who experienced the events, in such a way as to make the memories transmissible to future generations. For Buck, Curly's death as a result of her naïve advances to an inside dog would have formed such a memory. Its lesson needed to be learned, not just by Buck, but by his descendants. In dreams, valuable ancestral lessons buried in the unconscious mind could be reprised even though the conscious mind had never learned them. By the campfire, Buck remembers back to prehistory when his wolf-ancestor allied with the ape-man.

Such a thread would be later taken up by London in the novels *Before Adam* and *The Star Rover*, in both of which men experience ancestral memories and are transported far back in time. In the prehistoric flashbacks here and in *The Call of the Wild*, London is revising familiar myths of metempsychosis or reincarnation from a quasi-scientific perspective. But it is not necessary to believe that one has been a dog in a previous life in order to empathize with London's canine protagonist. His imaginative absorption of evolutionary theory and his great literary skill together ensure most readers' ability to identify with Buck. With *The Call of the Wild* Jack London finally threw down the artificial barrier that the Judeo-Christian scriptures had erected between the human world and the animal kingdom. In the anticipatory phraseology of Charles G.D. Roberts, after "the broadening out of all intellectual interests which characterise these modern days" *The Call of the Wild* is the animal story that, more directly than any earlier one, leads us "back to the old kinship of earth" (Appendix B).

1 Evidence from *Before Adam* (20) suggests that London probably thought that these memories were imprinted on the "germ-plasm," the organic element that, according to the German biologist August Weismann (1834–1914), was transmitted from one generation to the next and was therefore responsible for heredity.

The Reception of *The Call of the Wild*

The critical response to *The Call of the Wild* in 1903 was overwhelmingly positive, suggesting that on occasion critics can recognize a masterpiece immediately. The first reviewers identified many different strengths in the novella, foreshadowing the breadth of its continuing appeal. It is remarkable how perceptive (in the aggregate) the reviews were, for there are few subsequent major approaches to *The Call of the Wild* that were not initiated in the latter half of 1903. Inevitably, however, there were a few dissenting opinions.

The *New York Times* approved that Jack London's dogs were "not merely people masquerading in animal skins" (Appendix H1), setting *The Call of the Wild* apart from earlier animal fictions. The *Comrade* agreed to the extent of asserting that London's "marvellous power" of depicting dogs was unprecedented in literature (Appendix H7). Both critics were implying that *The Call of the Wild* compared well with other animal stories, especially Kipling's. Other reviewers drew a more overt contrast between London and the contemporary author most strongly associated with animal stories. The (London) *Athenaeum* commended the author for breaking with the Kipling influence (Appendix H6); evidently the young Californian's fictional progress had already been favourably noted in the British capital. The (San Francisco) *Argonaut*, ignoring the more obvious contrast with *The Jungle Books* and the *Just So Stories* (1902), noted that as Kipling was the poet of modern technology as typified by steam and machines, so London was the prose-poet of modern science as represented by the doctrine of evolution (Appendix H4). Charles Amadon Moody, co-editor of Los Angeles-based *Out West*, agreed that the novella was of "deep evolutionary significance" (321).

Critics indifferent to dogs still found much to praise. Mary Calkins Brooke of the (San Francisco) *Bulletin* was confident that the story of Buck's "degeneration" was an allegory of the destructive power of money (Appendix H5). H.W. Boynton of *Atlantic Monthly* allowed for the possibility of an allegorical reading, but decided judiciously that a realistic one was sufficiently powerful in itself (Appendix H12). George Hamlin Fitch of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, while acknowledging the canine identity of the protagonist, found *The Call of the Wild* to be the best fictional portrait thus far of the Klondike gold rush (Appendix H3). The *Literary Digest* of New York invoked not Kipling but Homer, and

made the prediction (slightly daring in a reviewer) that the book would be a classic (Appendix H10).

Perceived weaknesses were excused, sometimes entirely. The *Independent*, a New York weekly, noted that *The Call of the Wild* lacked “the humanly sentimental element” (namely, a conventional love story), but considered that the vivid portrait of Buck was more than sufficient compensation (Anon., “Literature” 1933). The distinguished progressive weekly the *Nation* observed that “the background of Arctic scenery is merely suggested,” but this sketchiness allowed Buck’s story to be told with “simple directness” (Appendix H11). J. Stewart Doubleday of the *Reader* first reproached London for his cruelty, then forgave him for being so true to life, bless his “big Californian heart” (Appendix H9). Fitch of the *Chronicle* was determined to praise the local boy without patronizing him: the novella’s one “false note” was the sentimentality implicit in Buck’s annual return to Thornton’s grave (Appendix H3).

Several reviewers, male and female, referred admiringly to the author’s “virile pen” (or used a similar phrase). Such locutions, misleading today, were intended to imply that Jack London was commendably unabashed by Mrs. Grundy’s warnings that a delicate-minded “Young Person” might be inadvertently contaminated by too much “realism” in her bedside reading. Inevitably, Mrs. Grundy’s minions did object to *The Call of the Wild*. *Gunton’s Magazine* noted, “It is a story of brutality, unredeemed either by truths taught of this wild life, or by any moral result at the close.... the effect of the book can not be but injurious to every impressionable mind that may read it” (Anon., “Book Reviews” 364–66).

One review of *The Call of the Wild* seems almost perversely negative, even slamming the otherwise widely admired appearance of the book. After conceding the story’s “great power,” Florence Jackson, editor of the San Francisco-based *Overland Monthly* claimed that it was morally deficient because no progressive elements served to counterbalance Buck’s unfortunate decivilization (Appendix H8). However, it is likely that Jack London’s “history” with *Overland* determined the tone of this review. In 1899 *Overland* had been the first periodical to buy a story from him, but their derisory offer of \$5 almost made him give up his literary ambitions there and then. They were also so slow at paying contributors that he once had to go to the editorial offices and physically threaten the editors to get his fee. Apparently *Overland* were petty enough not to have put such incidents behind them.

Jackson thought *The Call of the Wild* looked cheap, but it was *Overland* that behaved cheaply.

The Plagiarism Issue

As an author who was also a wealthy celebrity, Jack London was widely envied. His best-selling works were scrutinized by those who, having previously written themselves on similar subjects for more modest returns, felt that they deserved a share of his generous proceeds—or, failing that, greater public attention. This led to a number of public accusations of plagiarism, most of which London responded to fully. No lawsuits on this ground were ever brought against him.

In March 1906, the New York *World* drew readers' attention to similarities between London's story "Love of Life" (1905), first published in *McClure's Magazine* in 1905, and a factual article that had been published in the same magazine four years earlier. London defended himself by arguing that all fiction writers researched factual material to give credibility to their stories, and that his work of literature had both a different ontological status and higher aesthetic value than, say, a newspaper report (*L* 2:568-70). In October 1906, on the serial publication of London's prehistoric novel *Before Adam*, the journalist Stanley Waterloo accused London in the *San Francisco Morning Call* of plagiarizing from a popular prehistoric novel he had published ten years earlier. London defended himself by highlighting the considerable differences between the two novels, noting that it was ridiculous for a novelist to imagine that he could monopolize human prehistory (*L* 2:623-25).¹

Though London produced a strong defence in both cases, the wolves were out for him. In February 1907, a Mrs. Bosworth of Eureka, Kansas, published a short article in the *Independent* in which she noted similarities between eleven passages in the memoir *My Dogs in the Northland* by the Canadian missionary Egerton R. Young, and *The Call of the Wild*.² Material associated with this article, including London's response to Bosworth, is reproduced in Appendix I. And in *Vanity Fair* in April 1909 the journalist and controversialist Frank Harris accused London of having stolen part of an article he had published in 1901, repro-

1 See Ruddick 46-47 for more about this episode.

2 See Franklin Walker 240-42 for a judicious evaluation of London's borrowings from Young.

ducing it verbatim in *The Iron Heel*. In this case London did not deny using the paragraphs, but claimed that, though he had made a fool of himself by having misunderstood their status in the Harris article, he had not deliberately plagiarized them (*L* 2:812–13, 2:825–26, 2:839–40).

Two related accusations, though not strictly of plagiarism and not directed at Jack London alone, also constituted public attacks on his professional credibility. The more serious one, already mentioned, was the 1907 assault by President Theodore Roosevelt on London as one of the “nature fakers.” And in October 1908 Arthur Stringer, a Canadian novelist, accused London in *Canada West* magazine of being a prominent “Canada Faker” (1140): his Klondike fiction revealed a weak grasp of Canadian culture and pandered to the belief that “Everything above the forty-ninth parallel must be written down as blood and raw beef” (1142).¹

From the evidence in Appendix I, readers should decide for themselves whether they think that Jack London plagiarized *My Dogs in the Northland*. In this vein, it may be noted that accusations of plagiarism are now a common hazard of life for celebrity authors, recent incidents having involved Dan Brown, Yann Martel, and J.K. Rowling. For a useful exploration of how Jack London’s celebrity brought into prominence issues of authorial identity, literary authenticity, and popular desire, see Loren Glass’s essay “Nobody’s Renown” (1999).

Structure: Division, Transformation, Unity

The Call of the Wild has an exemplary unity. In *White Fang* the canine protagonist is not introduced until the sixth chapter, but the first word of *The Call of the Wild* is Buck’s name, and its last sentence leaves us with a consummate image of Buck’s narrative dominance. The novella’s Klondike context and its related themes are introduced in the novella’s second sentence. The “yellow metal” (*CW* 53) is gold seen from a nonhuman perspective (such as that of a dog or wolf), a saner one than that of humans afflicted with Klondike fever. The motif is echoed at the end of the novella’s penultimate paragraph, when a “yellow stream” (*CW* 131) flows from rotted bags and re-enters the earth. Thus from only the novella’s opening and closing sentences, one can derive its tripartite main theme: men, attempting to subject

1 For London’s response, see *L* 2:822–23.

Nature to their will, are devoured by their greed; gold remains its inorganic, unalterable, indifferent self; Buck, responsive to Nature's call, ascends to immortality.

While *The Call of the Wild* contains many mythic parallels and allusions,¹ it also adapts the structure of a familiar fairy tale. It is the well-loved story of a motherless child born into a wealthy family, who at sexual maturity loses her status through no fault of her own, and must thereafter endure humiliation and pass a test of virtue. When she is at her lowest point, a higher-order personage associated with her lost parent intervenes, and thereafter the protagonist quickly regains her status and mates successfully. We know the tale best as "Cinderella" in the versions by Charles Perrault and Walt Disney, though it has innumerable variants, a few of which, strangely enough, have male protagonists.² In many versions of traditional tales very closely related to "Cinderella," such as "Catskin," an exiled protagonist dons a rough animal skin to disguise her beauty—and, as we shall see, even here Jack London does not depart too far from the fairy tale archetype.

Buck starts out as an imperious ruler of a "demesne" living life "in right royal fashion" (CW 54). Yet by the time he is in the team of the Incapables,³ "All the stiffness and gloss had gone out of his beautiful furry coat. The hair hung down, limp and dragged, or matted with dried blood" (100). At this nadir Thornton rescues him, weaves his love-magic, and soon Buck is once again at the peak of physical beauty: "He was in perfect condition, without an ounce of superfluous flesh, and the one hundred and fifty pounds that he weighed were so many pounds of grit and virility. His furry coat shone with the sheen of silk" (114). Ultimately, Buck

1 E.g., parallels to the Jungian/Campbellian Myth of the Hero have been identified by Labor ("Jack London's *Mondo Cane*" 119–23), and allusions to expulsion from Eden, initiation, descent into hell, and resurrection have been noted by Johnson 15–19.

2 London may not have been conscious of these parallels, though his choice of the name "Perrault" for Buck's first Klondike owner suggests otherwise. Perrault's "Cinderella" (1697) was adapted by Disney for his animated film version (1950).

3 Charles, Mercedes, and Hal are sometimes referred to as tenderfeet or cheechakos, but these terms merely imply a lack of Northland experience; "Incapables," borrowed from London's 1899 story "In a Far Country" (74), expresses more clearly the absolute failure to adapt to new conditions that will seal their fate.

no more degenerates than Cinderella: rather he reassumes the beauty that is rightfully his, making him now ready to mate successfully.

If *The Call of the Wild* inverts the gendering of one well-known fairy tale, it also inverts the moral status of the antagonist in another. Unlike the deceiver of “Little Red Riding Hood,” the wolf in *The Call of the Wild* represents a state of authentic being that Buck must attain. By contrast, all that is touched by civilization, including Thornton the ideal master, has been tarnished by greed for the yellow metal. The Yeehats, representing human savagery,¹ while indifferent to gold (they have left Thornton’s bags to rot), offer no salvation to Buck, as they are treacherous, murderous and haunted by superstition. What alone remains incorrupt is the wild that calls to Buck. He must slough off the dog-skin of man’s dominion to reveal the wolf beneath.

Each of the seven chapters of *The Call of the Wild* delineates a stage in Buck’s journey of transformation, and in each he crosses at least one “divide,” a literal or figurative watershed.² The first chapter transports Buck into snowy exile at Dyea beach, separating him forever from his domain in the California sun. It is a dethroning he will only be able to survive because he has learned humility at the hands of the man with the red sweater. But already his long-forgotten instincts are returning. He feels “ashamed” (CW 63) at his unfamiliarity with snow because he is instinctively recalling that he is half St. Bernard, a breed developed to rescue victims of Alpine avalanches.

In the second chapter, Buck, having observed the destruction of Curly at Dyea, goes over the “Chilcoot Divide” (CW 68) into the Northland. The economic forces driving the Klondike gold rush are already insignificant compared to the transformative forces at work upon Buck. His decivilization seems to be moral retrogression (he steals) but in truth it is adaptive behaviour, crucial to survival, learned by hearkening to the now audible voices of those “forgotten ancestors” (CW 71), his instincts.

In the third chapter Buck defeats Spitz, the inside dog and team leader, and thereby crosses the gulf of millennia separating the imperious house dog from the “dominant primordial

1 For postcolonial readings of the Yeehat episode, see Gair 204–05 and Giles, “Assaulting the Yeehats” 188–201.

2 See also Mann 4.

beast.” In the fourth chapter, Buck successfully imposes his will on his masters and assumes the role of lead dog. His subsequent change of ownership is only a pseudo-transition: he is halfway to being his own master, and his relations with men are couched in the awareness that, if he remains a work-beast, he will eventually suffer the same fate as Dave. The divide he is crossing is that of memory: his recollections of the Southland are being supplanted by more adaptive ancestral ones—those of the wolf-dog who was the partner, not the property, of pre-historic man.

In the fifth chapter, at the hands of the Incapables, Buck arrives at the lowest point of his fortunes, but John Thornton, fairy godfather with a touch of Prince Charming, intervenes and separates him from the Incapables before he meets Dave’s fate. Chapter six deals with Buck’s recovery and his discovery of passionate love, a watershed in his emotional life. But Thornton, though an “ideal master,” cannot for obvious reasons be Buck’s mate; besides, he has gold, rather than Buck, at heart. Passing tests of devotion, courage, and strength, Buck is valued at \$1,200—rather less than he has won for Thornton—and by measuring the Skookum Bench king’s bid against what we know to be Buck’s priceless qualities we may estimate the abject depth of canine slavery to man.

In the final chapter, Thornton’s team crosses mountain divides, representing the transition from the familiar world into terra incognita. Buck is unwittingly being prepared for his final transit out of space and time and into legend. He now makes first contact with the emissary from his lost tribe, the brother wolf. Increasingly left to himself by his gold-obsessed human companions, he crosses divides alone, though he has not yet the will to make a final break with his love-master. He undergoes rites of passage against wild opponents, and vigour, vitality, and virility now stream through him. Soon, through his new attunement to Nature, he is apprised that the change has come that he could not himself initiate. To avenge his love-master’s death, he kills a man and finds it easy. There is now no going back, and indeed the wolf pack comes over the divide to confront him. He establishes his dominance by killing his rivals and is accepted into the pack as leader. His new domain is tabooed by the Yeehats, who have demonized him as the Ghost Dog. But in truth he is now a “great, gloriously coated” mating wolf (CW 131).

Solitary, Buck mourns the loss of his human ties, and muses on vanity and greed. But the last sentence of the novella dispels the elegiac note in its magnificent freeze-frame closure. Far larger than life, a wolf among wolves, Buck is arrested forever in mid-leap, an image of the power of recuperated natural vigour to transcend gravity, while his song beneath the aurora continues to resonate, an image of the power of great art to defeat mortality.

Jack London: A Brief Chronology

[Works are dated by first US book publication. Abbreviations: n = novel or novella; ss = short story collection; f = other prose fictional work; p = play; e = essay collection; nf = other non-fictional work.]

- 1876 John Griffith Chaney born 12 January in San Francisco, son of Flora Wellman, a spiritualist and music teacher, and (probably) William Henry Chaney, an astrologer. His mother marries widower John London, 7 September, and the infant is given his stepfather's surname and gains stepsisters Eliza and Ida London.
- 1879 Contracts near-fatal diphtheria. The Londons move to Oakland, then to nearby Alameda.
- 1881 Begins elementary school, Alameda.
- 1883 The Londons move to a ranch in San Mateo County.
- 1885 The Londons move to a ranch in Livermore, then back to Oakland.
- 1886 Taken under the wing of Ina Coolbrith at the Oakland Public Library.
- 1887 Enrols at Cole Grammar School, West Oakland.
- 1891–92 Graduates from eighth grade. Works in a cannery. Buys sloop *Razzle-Dazzle* and becomes oyster pirate, then deputy fish patrol officer, on San Francisco Bay.
- 1893 Ships aboard sealing schooner *Sophia Sutherland* for Bering Sea, January–August. Works in jute mill, August. Wins first prize for “Story of a Typhoon off the Coast of Japan” sponsored by *San Francisco Morning Call*, published 12 November.
- 1894 Works heaving coal in an electric power plant. Joins “Kelly’s Army” march to Washington DC to protest unemployment, 6 April–25 May. Drops out at Hannibal, MO, and wanders, riding the rails. Visits Chicago and relatives in St. Joseph, MI. Arrested for vagrancy in Niagara Falls, NY, 29 June, and spends thirty days in Erie County Penitentiary, Buffalo. Returns to Oakland via New England and Canada.

- 1895 Attends Oakland High School, publishing essays and stories in *The High School Aegis*, from January. Falls in love with Mabel Applegarth.
- 1896 Enrols in the University Academy in Alameda, spring. Joins the Socialist Labor Party of Oakland, April. Meets Elizabeth ("Bessie") Maddern. Enters the University of California at Berkeley, September.
- 1897 Leaves university, 4 February. Is arrested, tried, and acquitted for speaking on the street without a permit, February. Stands unsuccessfully for Oakland Board of Education, March. Writes essays, poems, jokes, spring. Corresponds with W.H. Chaney, who denies paternity, May–June. Works in laundry of Belmont Academy. *Excelsior* docks in San Francisco, marking start of Klondike Gold Rush, 14 July. Embarks for Klondike, 25 July, arriving in Dyea, Alaska, 7 August. Reaches Stewart River, NWT and prospects for gold at Henderson Creek, October. John London dies in Oakland, 14 October. Records gold claim in Dawson, 5 November. Winters in cabin at Split-Up Island.
- 1898 Contracts scurvy, May, dismantles cabin, and floats logs downstream to Dawson. Leaves by boat for St. Michael's, Alaska, 8 June. Arrives Oakland, July, to learn of stepfather's death. Begins to write in earnest, sending stories to magazines.
- 1899 First professional published story, "To the Man on [the] Trail," *Overland Monthly*, January. Turns down job in post office, January. Meets Anna Strunsky, December.
- 1900 First major story publication, "A Odyssey of the North," *Atlantic Monthly*, January. First book, *The Son of the Wolf* (ss), April. Marries Bessie Maddern, 7 April.
- 1901 Daughter Joan born, 15 January. *The God of His Fathers* (ss), May.
- 1902 "Bâtard" published as "Diable—a Dog" in *Cosmopolitan*, June. To England to research conditions in London's East End, 6 August for six weeks. *Children of the Frost* (ss), September. *The Cruise of the Dazzler* (n), October. *A Daughter of the Snows* (n), October. Daughter Bess ("Becky") born, 20 October. Begins *The Call of the Wild*, 1 December. Signs two-year contract for six books with Macmillan, 11 December.
- 1903 Death of W.H. Chaney, Chicago, 8 January. Submits *The Call of the Wild* to *Saturday Evening Post*, 26 January. *The*

- Kempton-Wace Letters* (f), co-written with Anna Strunsky and published anonymously, May. Falls in love with Charmian Kittredge, June. *The Call of the Wild* serialized in *Saturday Evening Post*, 20 June–18 July. *The Call of the Wild* (n) published as book by Macmillan, July. Leaves his wife, mid-July. *The People of the Abyss* (nf), October.
- 1904 In Japan and Korea to report on Russo-Japanese War, 7 January though June. Seriously injures ankles and knees in a fall, 15 January. Arrested, fined in Japan for taking photos of military installations, February. *The Faith of Men* (ss), April. Wife sues for divorce, mistakenly naming Anna Strunsky as cause of separation, 28 June. *The Sea-Wolf* (n), October.
- 1905 Defeated as Social Democrat candidate for Mayor of Oakland. First stay at Wake Robin Lodge, Glen Ellen, California, April–September. *War of the Classes* (e), April. Buys Hill Ranch, Glen Ellen, first parcel of Beauty Ranch, June. *The Game* (n), June. *Tales of the Fish Patrol* (ss), September. Socialist lecture tour of East and Midwest, October. Divorced from wife, 18 November. Marries Charmian Kittredge, Chicago, 19 November. Honeymoon in Jamaica and Cuba.
- 1906 Attacks capitalism at controversial lectures at Carnegie Hall, Yale University, etc., January. Begins building schooner *Snark* for around-the-world cruise. Reports on 18 April San Francisco earthquake for *Collier's*. *Moon Face* (ss), September. *White Fang* (n), October. *Scorn of Women* (p), November.
- 1907 *Before Adam* (n), February. *Snark* is launched, 23 April. Arrives in Hawaii, 20 May. *Love of Life* (ss), September. *The Road* (nf), November. Arrives in Tahiti, 27 December.
- 1908 Returns with Charmian on *Mariposa* to sort out finances, arriving San Francisco, 25 January. Sails back to Tahiti, 2 February. *The Iron Heel* (n), February. Visits Samoa, Fiji, Guadalcanal, Australia, April–November. Contracts malaria, July. Hospitalized in Sydney for numerous tropical diseases, November.
- 1909 Having abandoned *Snark* voyage, returns to Glen Ellen, 24 July. *Martin Eden* (n), September. Injures ankle in buggy accident, 31 December.
- 1910 Hires stepsister Eliza as business manager, February. *Revolution* (e), March. *Lost Face* (ss), March. Birth and

- death of daughter Joy, 19 and 21 June. *Burning Daylight* (n), October. *Theft* (p), November. Begins plans to build Wolf House on Beauty Ranch, November.
- 1911 *When God Laughs* (ss), January. *Adventure* (n), March. *The Cruise of the Snark* (nf), June. With Charmian, drives horse wagon from Glen Ellen to Oregon and back, June–September. *South Sea Tales* (ss), October.
- 1912 Sails barque *Dirigo* from Baltimore, 2 March, around Cape Horn to Seattle, arriving 26 July. *The House of Pride* (ss), March. *A Son of the Sun* (n), May. Returns to Glen Ellen, 4 August. Charmian suffers miscarriage, 11 August. *Smoke Bellew* (n), October.
- 1913 *The Night-Born* (ss), February. *The Abyssmal Brute* (n), May. Suffers appendicitis, 8 July. *John Barleycorn* (nf), August. Wolf House destroyed by fire, 21–22 August. *The Valley of the Moon* (n), October.
- 1914 Reports for *Collier's* on Mexican Revolution, April–June. Suffers acute dysentery, 30 May. *The Strength of the Strong* (ss), May. *The Mutiny of the Elsinore* (n), September.
- 1915 Attack of acute rheumatism, 12 February. To Hawaii for his health, 23 February–23 July. *The Scarlet Plague* (n), May. *The Star Rover* (n), October. Returns to Hawaii, 16 December.
- 1916 *The Acorn Planter* (p), February. Resigns from Socialist Party, 7 March. *The Little Lady of the Big House* (n), April. Leaves Hawaii, 26 July. *The Turtles of Tasman* (ss), September. Dies of kidney failure caused by uremia and chronic intestinal nephritis, probably exacerbated by chronic alcoholism and poisoning by self-administered morphine, 22 November. After cremation, ashes buried on Beauty Ranch (now Jack London State Historic Park).

Posthumous Publications

- 1917 *The Human Drift* (e and p); *Jerry of the Islands* (n); *Michael, Brother of Jerry* (n).
- 1918 *The Red One* (n and ss).
- 1919 *On the Makaloa Mat* (ss).
- 1920 *Hearts of Three* (f).
- 1922 *Dutch Courage* (ss).
- 1963 *The Assassination Bureau, Ltd.* (unfinished n), completed by Robert L. Fish.

A Note on the Text

The Call of the Wild first appeared in print as a serial in the *Saturday Evening Post* (*SEP*), but this text is a version of the approximately 31,800-word Macmillan text (see below) shortened and somewhat carelessly edited to fit the requirements of magazine serialization in five episodes.

SEP has the following chapter divisions and pagination:

- (1) *SEP* 175 (20 June 1903): “I—Into the Primitive” (1–2); “II—The Law of Club and Fang” (3, 30–31).
- (2) *SEP* 175 (27 June 1903): “III—The Death Struggle” (9–11); “IV—Who Has Won to Mastership” (19–20).
- (3) *SEP* 176 (4 July 1903): “IV—A Tale of Trace and Trail” (9–10); “V—The Toil of Trace and Trail” (10–11, 24).
- (4) *SEP* 176 (11 July 1903): “V—Buck’s New Master” (10–11).
- (5) *SEP* 176 (18 July 1903): “VII—The Transformation” (12–13, 24).

As can be seen, *SEP* has two chapter IVs and two chapter Vs with different titles, chapters IV and V with almost the same title, and no chapter VI. *SEP* also has many minor differences from Macmillan, including a repetition of the four-line epigraph on page 10 of the fourth instalment (wrongly headed “IV”), the only indication that Macmillan chapter VI is beginning. There is also a large textual cut: missing from *SEP* are about 3,200 words beginning “Thornton alone held him” concluding Macmillan chapter VI and containing the episodes of the cliff at Tanana, “Black” Burton at Circle City, the near-drownings at Forty-Mile Creek, and the breaking out of the sled at Dawson.

The text of *The Call of the Wild* used here is that of the first book edition (New York: Macmillan, July 1903). As Donald Pizer has noted, though magazine serialization occurred first, book publication “‘restored’ the work to its author’s intent,” while London “is not known to have revised any work after its first book appearance” (995).

In the text included here, Macmillan’s often British spellings such as “axe,” “centre,” “defence,” “draught,” “fibre,” “manœuvre,” “marvellous,” “practised,” “sombre,” and “travelled,” London’s unconventional spellings such as “forewent” and “wolverenes,” and his coinages such as “obscreness,” and “lur-

ingly” have been retained. As these are not errors, there is no reason to correct them.

All place-names in Macmillan are retained as London spelled them (e.g., “Le Barge,” “Skaguay”), as most were standard or accepted spellings at the time. Current spellings are used in the footnotes; original spellings are used in the maps.

In cases of doubtful word division, *SEP* and the edition illustrated by Paul Bransom (New York: Macmillan, 1912) have been consulted.

The following three emendations to the Macmillan text have been made:

unforgetable = unforgettable (*CW* 64)

teams = team (*CW* 77)

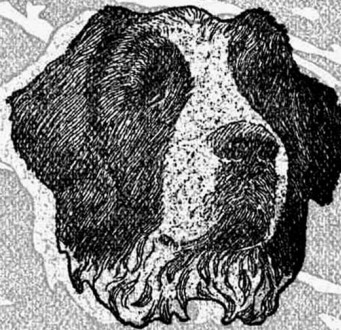
body so = body, so (*CW* 105)

A textual note on “Bâtard” is included in Appendix F.

Illustrated by PHILIP R. GOODWIN
and CHARLES LIVINGSTON BULL

THE CALL OF THE WILD

By
JACK LONDON



New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
LONDON: MACMILLAN & CO., Ltd.
1903

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Decorated by CHAS. EDW. HOOPER

Figure 2: Original title page of Macmillan edition, by Charles Edward Hooper

THE CALL OF THE WILD

I

Into the Primitive

“Old longings nomadic leap,
Chafing at custom’s chain;
Again from its brumal sleep
Wakens the ferine strain.”¹

Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tide-water² dog, strong of muscle and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego.³ Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal,⁴ and because steamship and transportation companies were booming⁵ the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted dogs, and the dogs they wanted were heavy dogs, with strong muscles by which to toil, and furry coats to protect them from the frost.

Buck lived at a big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley.⁶ Judge Miller’s place, it was called. It stood back from the road, half hidden among the trees, through which glimpses could be caught of the wide cool veranda that ran around its four sides. The house was approached by gravelled driveways which wound about through wide-spreading lawns and under the interlacing boughs of tall poplars. At the rear things were on even a more spacious scale than at the front. There were great stables, where a dozen grooms and boys held forth, rows of vine-clad servants’ cottages, an endless and orderly array of outhouses, long grape arbors, green pastures, orchards, and berry patches. Then there was the pumping plant for the artesian well, and the big cement tank where Judge Miller’s boys took their morning plunge and kept cool in the hot afternoon.

1 See Appendix E5.

2 Coastal.

3 I.e., all along the US Pacific coast from northern Washington State to southern California.

4 See *CW* 55, note 1.

5 Loudly publicizing.

6 A valley south of San Francisco Bay in California. Once filled with orchards, it is now much urbanized.

And over this great demesne¹ Buck ruled. Here he was born, and here he had lived the four years of his life. It was true, there were other dogs. There could not but be other dogs on so vast a place, but they did not count. They came and went, resided in the populous kennels, or lived obscurely in the recesses of the house after the fashion of Toots, the Japanese pug, or Ysabel, the Mexican hairless,²—strange creatures that rarely put nose out of doors or set foot to ground. On the other hand, there were the fox terriers,³ a score of them at least, who yelped fearful promises at Toots and Ysabel looking out of the windows at them and protected by a legion of housemaids armed with brooms and mops.

But Buck was neither house-dog nor kennel-dog. The whole realm was his. He plunged into the swimming tank or went hunting with the Judge's sons; he escorted Mollie and Alice, the Judge's daughters, on long twilight or early morning rambles; on wintry nights he lay at the Judge's feet before the roaring library fire; he carried the Judge's grandsons on his back, or rolled them in the grass, and guarded their footsteps through wild adventures down to the fountain in the stable yard, and even beyond, where the paddocks were, and the berry patches. Among the terriers he stalked imperiously, and Toots and Ysabel he utterly ignored, for he was king,—king over all creeping, crawling, flying things of Judge Miller's place, humans included.

His father, Elmo, a huge St. Bernard,⁴ had been the Judge's inseparable companion, and Buck bid fair to follow in the way of his father. He was not so large,—he weighed only one hundred and forty pounds,⁵—for his mother, Shep, had been a Scotch shepherd dog.⁶ Nevertheless, one hundred and forty pounds, to which was added the dignity that comes of good living and universal respect, enabled him to carry himself in right royal fashion. During the four years since his puppyhood he had lived the life of a sated aristocrat; he had a fine pride in himself, was even a trifle egotistical, as country gentlemen sometimes become

1 Land attached to a medieval manor (here used figuratively).

2 The Japanese pug, now usually called the Japanese chin or Japanese spaniel, is a tiny long-haired lapdog; the Mexican hairless dog is a rare breed, a.k.a. the *Xoloitzcuintli* (xolo for short).

3 These "kennel-dogs," originally bred to root foxes out of their dens, are often used as watchdogs.

4 See Appendix D1.

5 64 kg.

6 (Now usually) collie; see Appendix D1.

because of their insular situation. But he had saved himself by not becoming a mere pampered house-dog. Hunting and kindred outdoor delights had kept down the fat and hardened his muscles; and to him, as to the cold-tubbing races, the love of water had been a tonic and a health preserver.

And this was the manner of dog Buck was in the fall of 1897, when the Klondike strike dragged men from all the world into the frozen North.¹ But Buck did not read the newspapers, and he did not know that Manuel, one of the gardener's helpers, was an undesirable acquaintance. Manuel had one besetting sin. He loved to play Chinese lottery.² Also, in his gambling, he had one besetting weakness—faith in a system; and this made his damnation certain. For to play a system requires money, while the wages of a gardener's helper do not lap over³ the needs of a wife and numerous progeny.

The Judge was at a meeting of the Raisin Growers' Association, and the boys were busy organizing an athletic club, on the memorable night of Manuel's treachery. No one saw him and Buck go off through the orchard on what Buck imagined was merely a stroll. And with the exception of a solitary man, no one saw them arrive at the little flag station known as College Park.⁴ This man talked with Manuel, and money chinked between them.

"You might wrap up the goods before you deliver 'm," the stranger said gruffly, and Manuel doubled a piece of stout rope around Buck's neck under the collar.

"Twist it, an' you'll choke 'm plentee," said Manuel, and the stranger grunted a ready affirmative.

Buck had accepted the rope with quiet dignity. To be sure, it was an unwonted⁵ performance: but he had learned to trust in men he knew, and to give them credit for a wisdom that out-reached his own. But when the ends of the rope were placed in

1 A major gold deposit was discovered at Bonanza (formerly Rabbit) Creek, a tributary of the Klondike River in what was then Canada's NWT in August 1896. News of the find reached the US in July 1897, setting off the greatest gold rush in history (see Appendix A1).

2 Also called keno, a bingo-like betting game brought to California by migrant Chinese labourers.

3 Cover.

4 A flag station is a minor station at which trains only stop if flagged down. College Park, California, now a suburb of San Jose, was formerly the site of California Wesleyan College, since renamed and relocated.

5 Out of the ordinary.

the stranger's hands, he growled menacingly. He had merely intimated his displeasure, in his pride believing that to intimate was to command. But to his surprise the rope tightened around his neck, shutting off his breath. In quick rage he sprang at the man, who met him halfway, grappled him close by the throat, and with a deft twist threw him over on his back. Then the rope tightened mercilessly, while Buck struggled in a fury, his tongue lolling out of his mouth and his great chest panting futilely. Never in all his life had he been so vilely treated, and never in all his life had he been so angry. But his strength ebbed, his eyes glazed, and he knew nothing when the train was flagged and the two men threw him into the baggage car.

The next he knew, he was dimly aware that his tongue was hurting and that he was being jolted along in some kind of a conveyance. The hoarse shriek of a locomotive whistling a crossing told him where he was. He had travelled too often with the Judge not to know the sensation of riding in a baggage car. He opened his eyes, and into them came the unbridled anger of a kidnapped king. The man sprang for his throat, but Buck was too quick for him. His jaws closed on the hand, nor did they relax till his senses were choked out of him once more.

"Yep, has fits," the man said, hiding his mangled hand from the baggageman, who had been attracted by the sounds of struggle. "I'm takin' 'm up for the boss to 'Frisco. A crack dog-doctor there thinks that he can cure 'm."

Concerning that night's ride, the man spoke most eloquently for himself, in a little shed back of a saloon on the San Francisco water front.

"All I get is fifty for it," he grumbled; "an' I wouldn't do it over for a thousand, cold cash."

His hand was wrapped in a bloody handkerchief, and the right trouser leg was ripped from knee to ankle.

"How much did the other mug get?" the saloon-keeper demanded.

"A hundred," was the reply. "Wouldn't take a sou¹ less, so help me."

"That makes a hundred and fifty," the saloon-keeper calculated; "and he's worth it, or I'm a squarehead."²

1 Low-denomination French coin.

2 A dull, stupid person.

The kidnapper undid the bloody wrappings and looked at his lacerated hand. "If I don't get the hydrophoby—" ¹

"It'll be because you was born to hang," laughed the saloon-keeper. "Here, lend me a hand before you pull your freight," ² he added.

Dazed, suffering intolerable pain from throat and tongue, with the life half throttled out of him, Buck attempted to face his tormentors. But he was thrown down and choked repeatedly, till they succeeded in filing the heavy brass collar from off his neck. Then the rope was removed, and he was flung into a cagelike crate.

There he lay for the remainder of the weary night, nursing his wrath and wounded pride. He could not understand what it all meant. What did they want with him, these strange men? Why were they keeping him pent up in this narrow crate? He did not know why, but he felt oppressed by the vague sense of impending calamity. Several times during the night he sprang to his feet when the shed door rattled open, expecting to see the Judge, or the boys at least. But each time it was the bulging face of the saloon-keeper that peered in at him by the sickly light of a tallow candle. And each time the joyful bark that trembled in Buck's throat was twisted into a savage growl.

But the saloon-keeper let him alone, and in the morning four men entered and picked up the crate. More tormentors, Buck decided, for they were evil-looking creatures, ragged and unkempt; and he stormed and raged at them through the bars. They only laughed and poked sticks at him, which he promptly assailed with his teeth till he realized that that was what they wanted. Whereupon he lay down sullenly and allowed the crate to be lifted into a wagon. Then he, and the crate in which he was imprisoned, began a passage through many hands. Clerks in the express office took charge of him; he was carted about in another wagon; a truck carried him, with an assortment of boxes and parcels, upon a ferry steamer; he was trucked off the steamer into a great railway depot, and finally he was deposited in an express car.

For two days and nights this express car was dragged along at the tail of shrieking locomotives; and for two days and nights Buck neither ate nor drank. In his anger he had met the first advances of the express messengers with growls, and they had

1 Hydrophobia, i.e., rabies.

2 Slang for "leave."

retaliated by teasing him. When he flung himself against the bars, quivering and frothing, they laughed at him and taunted him. They growled and barked like detestable dogs, mewed, and flapped their arms and crowed. It was all very silly, he knew; but therefore the more outrage to his dignity, and his anger waxed and waxed. He did not mind the hunger so much, but the lack of water caused him severe suffering and fanned his wrath to fever-pitch. For that matter, high-strung and finely sensitive, the ill treatment had flung him into a fever, which was fed by the inflammation of his parched and swollen throat and tongue.

He was glad for one thing: the rope was off his neck. That had given them an unfair advantage; but now that it was off, he would show them. They would never get another rope around his neck. Upon that he was resolved. For two days and nights he neither ate nor drank, and during those two days and nights of torment, he accumulated a fund of wrath that boded ill for whoever first fell foul of him. His eyes turned blood-shot, and he was metamorphosed into a raging fiend. So changed was he that the Judge himself would not have recognized him; and the express messengers breathed with relief when they bundled him off the train at Seattle.

Four men gingerly carried the crate from the wagon into a small, high-walled back yard. A stout man, with a red sweater that sagged generously at the neck, came out and signed the book for the driver. That was the man, Buck divined, the next tormentor, and he hurled himself savagely against the bars. The man smiled grimly, and brought a hatchet and a club.

"You ain't going to take him out now?" the driver asked.

"Sure," the man replied, driving the hatchet into the crate for a pry.

There was an instantaneous scattering of the four men who had carried it in, and from safe perches on top the wall they prepared to watch the performance.

Buck rushed at the splintering wood, sinking his teeth into it, surging and wrestling with it. Wherever the hatchet fell on the outside, he was there on the inside, snarling and growling, as furiously anxious to get out as the man in the red sweater was calmly intent on getting him out.

"Now, you red-eyed devil," he said, when he had made an opening sufficient for the passage of Buck's body. At the same time he dropped the hatchet and shifted the club to his right hand.

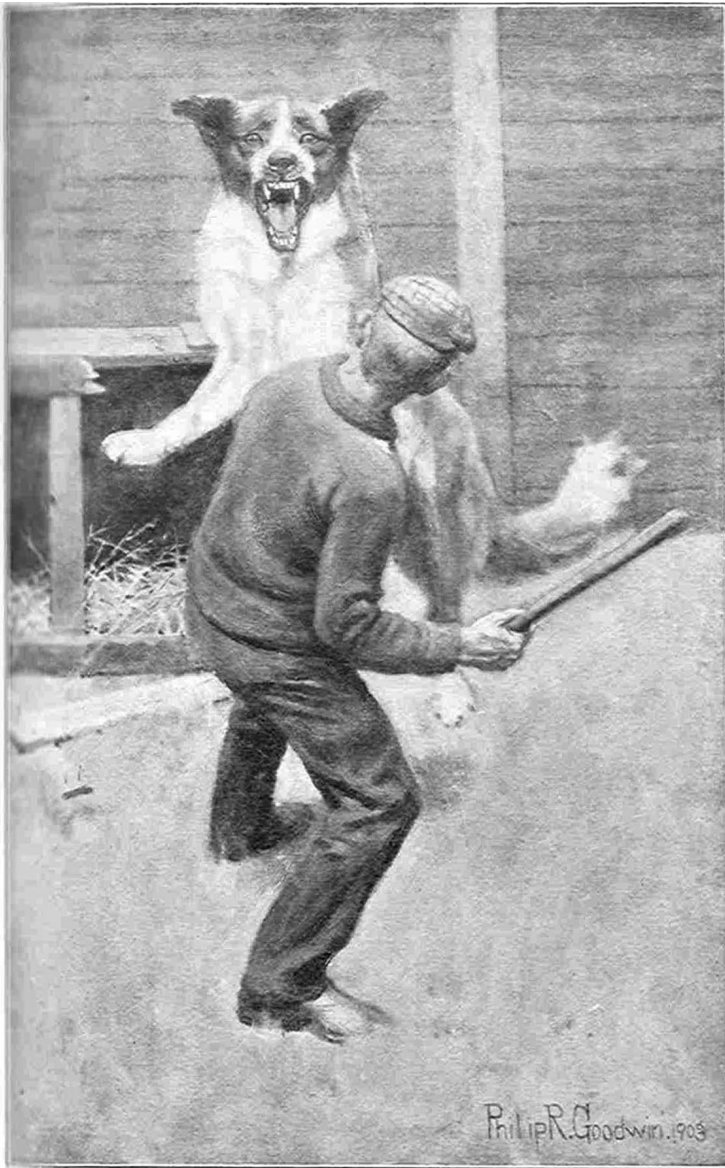


Figure 3: Buck and the Man in the Red Sweater, by Philip R. Goodwin

And Buck was truly a red-eyed devil, as he drew himself together for the spring, hair bristling, mouth foaming, a mad glitter in his blood-shot eyes. Straight at the man he launched his one hundred and forty pounds of fury, surcharged with the pent passion of two days and nights. In mid air, just as his jaws were about to close on the man, he received a shock that checked his body and brought his teeth together with an agonizing clip. He whirled over, fetching the ground on his back and side. He had never been struck by a club in his life, and did not understand. With a snarl that was part bark and more scream he was again on his feet and launched into the air. And again the shock came and he was brought crushingly to the ground. This time he was aware that it was the club, but his madness knew no caution. A dozen times he charged, and as often the club broke the charge and smashed him down.

After a particularly fierce blow, he crawled to his feet, too dazed to rush. He staggered limply about, the blood flowing from nose and mouth and ears, his beautiful coat sprayed and flecked with bloody slaver. Then the man advanced and deliberately dealt him a frightful blow on the nose. All the pain he had endured was as nothing compared with the exquisite agony of this. With a roar that was almost lionlike in its ferocity, he again hurled himself at the man. But the man, shifting the club from right to left, coolly caught him by the under jaw, at the same time wrenching downward and backward. Buck described a complete circle in the air, and half of another, then crashed to the ground on his head and chest.

For the last time he rushed. The man struck the shrewd blow he had purposely withheld for so long, and Buck crumpled up and went down, knocked utterly senseless.

"He's no slouch at dog-breakin', that's wot I say," one of the men on the wall cried enthusiastically.

"Druther break cayuses¹ any day, and twice on Sundays," was the reply of the driver, as he climbed on the wagon and started the horses.

Buck's senses came back to him, but not his strength. He lay where he had fallen, and from there he watched the man in the red sweater.

"Answers to the name of Buck," the man soliloquized, quoting from the saloon-keeper's letter which had announced the

1 "I'd rather tame wild horses."

consignment of the crate and contents. “Well, Buck, my boy,” he went on in a genial voice, “we’ve had our little ruction, and the best thing we can do is to let it go at that. You’ve learned your place, and I know mine. Be a good dog and all ’ll go well and the goose hang high.¹ Be a bad dog, and I’ll whale the stuffin’ outa you. Understand?”

As he spoke he fearlessly patted the head he had so mercilessly pounded, and though Buck’s hair involuntarily bristled at touch of the hand, he endured it without protest. When the man brought him water he drank eagerly, and later bolted a generous meal of raw meat, chunk by chunk, from the man’s hand.

He was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club. He had learned the lesson, and in all his after life he never forgot it. That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law, and he met the introduction halfway. The facts of life took on a fiercer aspect; and while he faced that aspect uncowed, he faced it with all the latent cunning of his nature aroused. As the days went by, other dogs came, in crates and at the ends of ropes, some docilely, and some raging and roaring as he had come; and, one and all, he watched them pass under the dominion of the man in the red sweater. Again and again, as he looked at each brutal performance, the lesson was driven home to Buck: a man with a club was a lawgiver, a master to be obeyed, though not necessarily conciliated. Of this last Buck was never guilty, though he did see beaten dogs that fawned upon the man, and wagged their tails, and licked his hand. Also he saw one dog, that would neither conciliate nor obey, finally killed in the struggle for mastery.

Now and again men came, strangers, who talked excitedly, wheedlingly, and in all kinds of fashions to the man in the red sweater. And at such times that money passed between them the strangers took one or more of the dogs away with them. Buck wondered where they went, for they never came back; but the fear of the future was strong upon him, and he was glad each time when he was not selected.

Yet his time came, in the end, in the form of a little weazened² man who spat broken English and many strange and uncouth exclamations which Buck could not understand.

1 “All will be right with the world.”

2 Usually “wizened,” i.e., with shrunken, dried-up facial features.

"Sacredam!"¹ he cried, when his eyes lit upon Buck. "Dat one dam bully dog! Eh? How moch?"

"Three hundred, and a present at that," was the prompt reply of the man in the red sweater. "And seein' it's government money, you ain't got no kick² coming, eh, Perrault?"

Perrault grinned. Considering that the price of dogs had been boomed skyward by the unwonted demand, it was not an unfair sum for so fine an animal. The Canadian Government would be no loser, nor would its despatches travel the slower. Perrault knew dogs, and when he looked at Buck he knew that he was one in a thousand—"One in ten t'ousand," he commented mentally.

Buck saw money pass between them, and was not surprised when Curly, a good-natured Newfoundland,³ and he were led away by the little weazened man. That was the last he saw of the man in the red sweater, and as Curly and he looked at receding Seattle from the deck of the *Narwhal*, it was the last he saw of the warm Southland. Curly and he were taken below by Perrault and turned over to a black-faced giant called François. Perrault was a French-Canadian, and swarthy; but François was a French-Canadian half-breed, and twice as swarthy. They were a new kind of men to Buck (of which he was destined to see many more), and while he developed no affection for them, he none the less grew honestly to respect them. He speedily learned that Perrault and François were fair men, calm and impartial in administering justice, and too wise in the way of dogs to be fooled by dogs.

In the 'tween-decks⁴ of the *Narwhal*, Buck and Curly joined two other dogs. One of them was a big, snow-white fellow from Spitzbergen⁵ who had been brought away by a whaling captain, and who had later accompanied a Geological Survey into the Barrens.⁶ He was friendly, in a treacherous sort of way, smiling into one's face the while he meditated some underhand trick, as, for instance, when he stole from Buck's food at the first meal. As

1 French-sounding oath combining *sacré* ("holy") and *dame* ("lady"), perhaps supposed to be an invocation of the Virgin Mary though undoubtedly influenced by English "damn" and probably fabricated by London on the analogy of the real French oath *sacrebleu!* ("confound it!") (see also Appendices F, G13).

2 "Bad consequences."

3 A large, shaggy breed of working dog (see also Appendix D1).

4 In the space between the decks.

5 Properly "Spitsbergen," a Norwegian island in the Arctic Ocean, believed to be the origin of the dog breed known as the Spitz.

6 The vast tundra region of the NWT between the Mackenzie River and Hudson Bay.

Buck sprang to punish him, the lash of François's whip sang through the air, reaching the culprit first; and nothing remained to Buck but to recover the bone. That was fair of François, he decided, and the half-breed began his rise in Buck's estimation.

The other dog made no advances, nor received any; also, he did not attempt to steal from the newcomers. He was a gloomy, morose fellow, and he showed Curly plainly that all he desired was to be left alone, and further, that there would be trouble if he were not left alone. "Dave" he was called, and he ate and slept, or yawned between times, and took interest in nothing, not even when the *Narwhal* crossed Queen Charlotte Sound¹ and rolled and pitched and bucked like a thing possessed. When Buck and Curly grew excited, half wild with fear, he raised his head as though annoyed, favored them with an incurious glance, yawned, and went to sleep again.

Day and night the ship throbbed to the tireless pulse of the propeller, and though one day was very like another, it was apparent to Buck that the weather was steadily growing colder. At last, one morning, the propeller was quiet, and the *Narwhal* was pervaded with an atmosphere of excitement. He felt it, as did the other dogs, and knew that a change was at hand. François leashed them and brought them on deck. At the first step upon the cold surface, Buck's feet sank into a white mushy something very like mud. He sprang back with a snort. More of this white stuff was falling through the air. He shook himself, but more of it fell upon him. He sniffed it curiously, then licked some up on his tongue. It bit like fire, and the next instant was gone. This puzzled him. He tried it again, with the same result. The onlookers laughed uproariously, and he felt ashamed, he knew not why, for it was his first snow.

II

The Law of Club and Fang

Buck's first day on the Dyea² beach was like a nightmare. Every hour was filled with shock and surprise. He had been suddenly

-
- 1 Strait of the Pacific Ocean between Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Islands, the only part of the coastal waterway known as the "Inside Passage" that is exposed to ocean swell.
 - 2 Dyea (pronounced "Dy-ee") was a settlement in coastal Alaska on the west side of the Taiya River estuary. Its nearby beach briefly served as the main disembarkation point for Klondike gold-seekers taking the Chilkoot Pass (as it is now spelled) to the headwaters of the Yukon River (see Appendix J Map 3).

jerked from the heart of civilization and flung into the heart of things primordial. No lazy, sun-kissed life was this, with nothing to do but loaf and be bored. Here was neither peace, nor rest, nor a moment's safety. All was confusion and action, and every moment life and limb were in peril. There was imperative need to be constantly alert; for these dogs and men were not town dogs and men. They were savages, all of them, who knew no law but the law of club and fang.

He had never seen dogs fight as these wolfish creatures fought, and his first experience taught him an unforgettable lesson. It is true, it was a vicarious experience, else he would not have lived to profit by it. Curly was the victim. They were camped near the log store, where she, in her friendly way, made advances to a husky dog the size of a full-grown wolf, though not half so large as she. There was no warning, only a leap in like a flash, a metallic clip of teeth, a leap out equally swift, and Curly's face was ripped open from eye to jaw.

It was the wolf manner of fighting, to strike and leap away; but there was more to it than this. Thirty or forty huskies ran to the spot and surrounded the combatants in an intent and silent circle. Buck did not comprehend that silent intentness, nor the eager way with which they were licking their chops. Curly rushed her antagonist, who struck again and leaped aside. He met her next rush with his chest, in a peculiar fashion that tumbled her off her feet. She never regained them. This was what the onlooking huskies had waited for. They closed in upon her, snarling and yelping, and she was buried, screaming with agony, beneath the bristling mass of bodies.

So sudden was it, and so unexpected, that Buck was taken aback. He saw Spitz run out his scarlet tongue in a way he had of laughing;¹ and he saw François, swinging an axe, spring into the mess of dogs. Three men with clubs were helping him to scatter them. It did not take long. Two minutes from the time Curly went down, the last of her assailants were clubbed off. But she lay there limp and lifeless in the bloody, trampled snow, almost literally torn to pieces, the swart² half-breed standing over her and cursing horribly. The scene often came back to Buck to trouble him in his sleep. So that was the way. No fair play. Once down, that was the end of you. Well, he would see to it that he never went down. Spitz ran out his tongue and laughed

1 See Appendix C3.

2 Dark-skinned.

again, and from that moment Buck hated him with a bitter and deathless hatred.

Before he had recovered from the shock caused by the tragic passing of Curly, he received another shock. François fastened upon him an arrangement of straps and buckles. It was a harness, such as he had seen the grooms put on the horses at home. And as he had seen horses work, so he was set to work, hauling François on a sled to the forest that fringed the valley, and returning with a load of firewood. Though his dignity was sorely hurt by thus being made a draught animal, he was too wise to rebel. He buckled down with a will and did his best, though it was all new and strange. François was stern, demanding instant obedience, and by virtue of his whip receiving instant obedience; while Dave, who was an experienced wheeler,¹ nipped Buck's hind quarters whenever he was in error. Spitz was the leader, likewise experienced, and while he could not always get at Buck, he growled sharp reproof now and again, or cunningly threw his weight in the traces to jerk Buck into the way he should go. Buck learned easily, and under the combined tuition of his two mates and François made remarkable progress. Ere they returned to camp he knew enough to stop at "ho," to go ahead at "mush,"² to swing wide on the bends, and to keep clear of the wheeler when the loaded sled shot downhill at their heels.

"T'ree vair' good dogs," François told Perrault. "Dat Buck, heem pool lak hell. I tich heem queek as anyt'ing."

By afternoon, Perrault, who was in a hurry to be on the trail with his despatches, returned with two more dogs. "Billee" and "Joe" he called them, two brothers, and true huskies both. Sons of the one mother though they were, they were as different as day and night. Billee's one fault was his excessive good nature, while Joe was the very opposite, sour and introspective, with a perpetual snarl and a malignant eye. Buck received them in comradely fashion, Dave ignored them, while Spitz proceeded to thrash first one and then the other. Billee wagged his tail appeasingly, turned to run when he saw that appeasement was of no avail, and cried

1 Wheelers, a.k.a. wheel-dogs, are those harnessed nearest the sled, picked for their calm temperament so as not to be startled by the proximity of the sled and for their ability to guide it around tight curves. Buck's position is that of a team-dog between the swing-dogs (those just behind the leader) and the wheelers, where he can add his strength without the need to show leadership qualities.

2 "Mush-on!" (often reduced to "Mush!") is a command to sled-dogs to set off; it probably derives from French *Marchons!* ("Let's go!")

(still appeasingly) when Spitz's sharp teeth scored his flank. But no matter how Spitz circled, Joe whirled around on his heels to face him, mane bristling, ears laid back, lips writhing and snarling, jaws clipping together as fast as he could snap, and eyes diabolically gleaming—the incarnation of belligerent fear. So terrible was his appearance that Spitz was forced to forego disciplining him; but to cover his own discomfiture he turned upon the inoffensive and wailing Billee and drove him to the confines of the camp.

By evening Perrault secured another dog, an old husky, long and lean and gaunt, with a battle-scarred face and a single eye which flashed a warning of prowess that commanded respect. He was called Sol-leks, which means the Angry One. Like Dave, he asked nothing, gave nothing, expected nothing; and when he marched slowly and deliberately into their midst, even Spitz left him alone. He had one peculiarity which Buck was unlucky enough to discover. He did not like to be approached on his blind side. Of this offence Buck was unwittingly guilty, and the first knowledge he had of his indiscretion was when Sol-leks whirled upon him and slashed his shoulder to the bone for three inches up and down. Forever after Buck avoided his blind side, and to the last of their comradeship had no more trouble. His only apparent ambition, like Dave's, was to be left alone; though, as Buck was afterward to learn, each of them possessed one other and even more vital ambition.

That night Buck faced the great problem of sleeping. The tent, illumined by a candle, glowed warmly in the midst of the white plain; and when he, as a matter of course, entered it, both Perrault and François bombarded him with curses and cooking utensils, till he recovered from his consternation and fled ignominiously into the outer cold. A chill wind was blowing that nipped him sharply and bit with especial venom into his wounded shoulder. He lay down on the snow and attempted to sleep, but the frost soon drove him shivering to his feet. Miserable and disconsolate, he wandered about among the many tents, only to find that one place was as cold as another. Here and there savage dogs rushed upon him, but he bristled his neck-hair and snarled (for he was learning fast), and they let him go his way unmolested.

Finally an idea came to him. He would return and see how his own team-mates were making out. To his astonishment, they had disappeared. Again he wandered about through the great camp, looking for them, and again he returned. Were they in the tent?

No, that could not be, else he would not have been driven out. Then where could they possibly be? With drooping tail and shivering body, very forlorn indeed, he aimlessly circled the tent. Suddenly the snow gave way beneath his fore legs and he sank down. Something wriggled under his feet. He sprang back, bristling and snarling, fearful of the unseen and unknown. But a friendly little yelp reassured him, and he went back to investigate. A whiff of warm air ascended to his nostrils, and there, curled up under the snow in a snug ball, lay Billee. He whined placatingly, squirmed and wriggled to show his good will and intentions, and even ventured, as a bribe for peace, to lick Buck's face with his warm wet tongue.

Another lesson. So that was the way they did it, eh? Buck confidently selected a spot, and with much fuss and waste effort proceeded to dig a hole for himself. In a trice the heat from his body filled the confined space and he was asleep. The day had been long and arduous, and he slept soundly and comfortably, though he growled and barked and wrestled with bad dreams.

Nor did he open his eyes till roused by the noises of the waking camp. At first he did not know where he was. It had snowed during the night and he was completely buried. The snow walls pressed him on every side, and a great surge of fear swept through him—the fear of the wild thing for the trap. It was a token that he was harking back through his own life to the lives of his forebears;¹ for he was a civilized dog, an unduly civilized dog, and of his own experience knew no trap and so could not of himself fear it. The muscles of his whole body contracted spasmodically and instinctively, the hair on his neck and shoulders stood on end, and with a ferocious snarl he bounded straight up into the blinding day, the snow flying about him in a flashing cloud. Ere he landed on his feet, he saw the white camp spread out before him and knew where he was and remembered all that had passed from the time he went for a stroll with Manuel to the hole he had dug for himself the night before.

A shout from François hailed his appearance. “Wot I say?” the dog-driver cried to Perrault. “Dat Buck for sure learn queek as anyt’ing.”

Perrault nodded gravely. As courier for the Canadian Government, bearing important despatches, he was anxious to secure the best dogs, and he was particularly gladdened by the possession of Buck.

1 I.e., he was adapting to his new circumstances by obeying ancestral memories (see Appendices E1, E3).

Three more huskies were added to the team inside an hour, making a total of nine, and before another quarter of an hour had passed they were in harness and swinging up the trail toward the Dyea Cañon.¹ Buck was glad to be gone, and though the work was hard he found he did not particularly despise it. He was surprised at the eagerness which animated the whole team and which was communicated to him; but still more surprising was the change wrought in Dave and Sol-leks. They were new dogs, utterly transformed by the harness. All passiveness and unconcern had dropped from them. They were alert and active, anxious that the work should go well, and fiercely irritable with whatever, by delay or confusion, retarded that work. The toil of the traces seemed the supreme expression of their being, and all that they lived for and the only thing in which they took delight.

Dave was wheeler or sled dog, pulling in front of him was Buck, then came Sol-leks; the rest of the team was strung out ahead, single file, to the leader, which position was filled by Spitz.

Buck had been purposely placed between Dave and Sol-leks so that he might receive instruction. Apt scholar that he was, they were equally apt teachers, never allowing him to linger long in error, and enforcing their teaching with their sharp teeth. Dave was fair and very wise. He never nipped Buck without cause, and he never failed to nip him when he stood in need of it. As François's whip backed him up, Buck found it to be cheaper to mend his ways than to retaliate. Once, during a brief halt, when he got tangled in the traces and delayed the start, both Dave and Sol-leks flew at him and administered a sound trouncing. The resulting tangle was even worse, but Buck took good care to keep the traces clear thereafter; and ere the day was done, so well had he mastered his work, his mates about ceased nagging him. François's whip snapped less frequently, and Perrault even honored Buck by lifting up his feet and carefully examining them.

It was a hard day's run, up the Cañon, through Sheep Camp, past the Scales and the timber line, across glaciers and snowdrifts hundreds of feet deep, and over the great Chilcoot Divide, which stands between the salt water and the fresh and guards forbid-
dingly the sad and lonely North.² They made good time down the

1 (Now Taiya River Canyon), gorge on the Chilcoot Trail about 8 miles/
13 km from Dyea.

2 During the gold rush, Sheep Camp was a tent city about 13 miles/
20 km from Dyea, the last point on the Chilcoot Trail where firewood
was available; the Scales (where goods had once been weighed by

chain of lakes which fills the craters of extinct volcanoes, and late that night pulled into the huge camp at the head of Lake Bennett, where thousands of gold-seekers were building boats against the break-up of the ice in the spring.¹ Buck made his hole in the snow and slept the sleep of the exhausted just, but all too early was routed out in the cold darkness and harnessed with his mates to the sled.

That day they made forty miles, the trail being packed; but the next day, and for many days to follow, they broke their own trail, worked harder, and made poorer time. As a rule, Perrault travelled ahead of the team, packing the snow with webbed shoes to make it easier for them. François, guiding the sled at the gee-pole,² sometimes exchanged places with him, but not often. Perrault was in a hurry, and he prided himself on his knowledge of ice, which knowledge was indispensable, for the fall ice was very thin, and where there was swift water, there was no ice at all.

Day after day, for days unending, Buck toiled in the traces. Always, they broke camp in the dark, and the first gray of dawn found them hitting the trail with fresh miles reeled off behind them. And always they pitched camp after dark, eating their bit of fish, and crawling to sleep into the snow. Buck was ravenous. The pound and a half³ of sun-dried salmon, which was his ration for each day, seemed to go nowhere. He never had enough, and suffered from perpetual hunger pangs. Yet the other dogs, because they weighed less and were born to the life, received a pound⁴ only of the fish and managed to keep in good condition.

He swiftly lost the fastidiousness which had characterized his old life. A dainty eater, he found that his mates, finishing first, robbed him of his unfinished ration. There was no defending it. While he was fighting off two or three, it was disappearing down

packers for the ascent) was a steep, exposed section of the Chilkoot Trail 3 miles/5 km farther on where the climb began up the "Golden Stairs" to the summit of the Chilkoot Pass (3,500 feet/1,067 m); the Chilkoot Divide is the spine of the Coast Mountains separating the Alaska panhandle from the chain of lakes (Crater Lake, Long Lake, Deep Lake, Lindeman Lake, and Bennett Lake) constituting a headwater of the Yukon River.

1 From the Bennett lakehead to Dawson is about 547 miles/881 km downstream (see Appendix J Map 2).

2 A sturdy pole lashed to the right side of a sled and used for steering, steadying, and helping the sled over obstacles. In dog-sledding jargon, "gee" means "right" and "haw" "left."

3 680 g.

4 454 g.

the throats of the others. To remedy this, he ate as fast as they; and, so greatly did hunger compel him, he was not above taking what did not belong to him. He watched and learned. When he saw Pike, one of the new dogs, a clever malingerer and thief, slyly steal a slice of bacon when Perrault's back was turned, he duplicated the performance the following day, getting away with the whole chunk. A great uproar was raised, but he was unsuspected; while Dub, an awkward blunderer who was always getting caught, was punished for Buck's misdeed.

This first theft marked Buck as fit to survive in the hostile Northland environment. It marked his adaptability, his capacity to adjust himself to changing conditions, the lack of which would have meant swift and terrible death. It marked, further, the decay or going to pieces of his moral nature, a vain thing and a handicap in the ruthless struggle for existence. It was all well enough in the Southland, under the law of love and fellowship, to respect private property and personal feelings; but in the Northland, under the law of club and fang, whoso took such things into account was a fool, and in so far as he observed them he would fail to prosper.

Not that Buck reasoned it out. He was fit, that was all, and unconsciously he accommodated himself to the new mode of life. All his days, no matter what the odds, he had never run from a fight. But the club of the man in the red sweater had beaten into him a more fundamental and primitive code. Civilized, he could have died for a moral consideration, say the defence of Judge Miller's riding-whip; but the completeness of his decivilization was now evidenced by his ability to flee from the defence of a moral consideration and so save his hide. He did not steal for joy of it, but because of the clamor of his stomach. He did not rob openly, but stole secretly and cunningly, out of respect for club and fang. In short, the things he did were done because it was easier to do them than not to do them.

His development (or retrogression) was rapid. His muscles became hard as iron, and he grew callous to all ordinary pain. He achieved an internal as well as external economy. He could eat anything, no matter how loathsome or indigestible; and, once eaten, the juices of his stomach extracted the last least particle of nutriment; and his blood carried it to the farthest reaches of his body, building it into the toughest and stoutest of tissues. Sight and scent became remarkably keen, while his hearing developed such acuteness that in his sleep he heard the faintest sound and knew whether it heralded peace or peril. He learned to bite the

ice out with his teeth when it collected between his toes; and when he was thirsty and there was a thick scum of ice over the water hole, he would break it by rearing and striking it with stiff fore legs. His most conspicuous trait was an ability to scent the wind and forecast it a night in advance. No matter how breathless the air when he dug his nest by tree or bank, the wind that later blew inevitably found him to leeward, sheltered and snug.

And not only did he learn by experience, but instincts long dead became alive again. The domesticated generations fell from him. In vague ways he remembered back to the youth of the breed, to the time the wild dogs ranged in packs through the primeval forest and killed their meat as they ran it down. It was no task for him to learn to fight with cut and slash and the quick wolf snap. In this manner had fought forgotten ancestors. They quickened the old life within him, and the old tricks which they had stamped into the heredity of the breed were his tricks. They came to him without effort or discovery, as though they had been his always. And when, on the still cold nights, he pointed his nose at a star and howled long and wolflike, it was his ancestors, dead and dust, pointing nose at star and howling down through the centuries and through him. And his cadences were their cadences, the cadences which voiced their woe and what to them was the meaning of the stillness, and the cold, and dark.

Thus, as token of what a puppet thing life is, the ancient song surged through him and he came into his own again; and he came because men had found a yellow metal in the North, and because Manuel was a gardener's helper whose wages did not lap over the needs of his wife and divers small copies of himself.

III

The Dominant Primordial Beast

The dominant primordial beast was strong in Buck, and under the fierce conditions of trail life it grew and grew. Yet it was a secret growth. His new-born cunning gave him poise and control. He was too busy adjusting himself to the new life to feel at ease, and not only did he not pick fights, but he avoided them whenever possible. A certain deliberateness characterized his attitude. He was not prone to rashness and precipitate action; and in the bitter hatred between him and Spitz he betrayed no impatience, shunned all offensive acts.

On the other hand, possibly because he divined in Buck a dangerous rival, Spitz never lost an opportunity of showing his teeth.

He even went out of his way to bully Buck, striving constantly to start the fight which could end only in the death of one or the other. Early in the trip this might have taken place had it not been for an unwonted accident. At the end of this day they made a bleak and miserable camp on the shore of Lake Le Barge.¹ Driving snow, a wind that cut like a white-hot knife, and darkness had forced them to grope for a camping place. They could hardly have fared worse. At their backs rose a perpendicular wall of rock, and Perrault and François were compelled to make their fire and spread their sleeping robes on the ice of the lake itself. The tent they had discarded at Dyea in order to travel light. A few sticks of driftwood furnished them with a fire that thawed down through the ice and left them to eat supper in the dark.

Close in under the sheltering rock Buck made his nest. So snug and warm was it, that he was loath to leave it when François distributed the fish which he had first thawed over the fire. But when Buck finished his ration and returned, he found his nest occupied. A warning snarl told him that the trespasser was Spitz. Till now Buck had avoided trouble with his enemy, but this was too much. The beast in him roared. He sprang upon Spitz with a fury which surprised them both, and Spitz particularly, for his whole experience with Buck had gone to teach him that his rival was an unusually timid dog, who managed to hold his own only because of his great weight and size.

François was surprised, too, when they shot out in a tangle from the disrupted nest and he divined the cause of the trouble. "A-a-ah!" he cried to Buck. "Gif it to heem, by Gar! Gif it to heem, the dirty t'eef!"

Spitz was equally willing. He was crying with sheer rage and eagerness as he circled back and forth for a chance to spring in. Buck was no less eager, and no less cautious, as he likewise circled back and forth for the advantage. But it was then that the unexpected happened, the thing which projected their struggle for supremacy far into the future, past many a weary mile of trail and toil.

An oath from Perrault, the resounding impact of a club upon a bony frame, and a shrill yelp of pain, heralded the breaking forth of pandemonium. The camp was suddenly discovered to be alive with skulking furry forms,—starving huskies, four or five

1 (Now Lake Laberge), a long lake formed by the widening of the Yukon River 124 miles/200 km downstream from Lake Bennett; Laberge is exposed, windy, and quick to freeze.

score of them, who had scented the camp from some Indian village.¹ They had crept in while Buck and Spitz were fighting, and when the two men sprang among them with stout clubs they showed their teeth and fought back. They were crazed by the smell of the food. Perrault found one with head buried in the grub-box. His club landed heavily on the gaunt ribs, and the grub-box was capsized on the ground. On the instant a score of the famished brutes were scrambling for the bread and bacon. The clubs fell upon them unheeded. They yelped and howled under the rain of blows, but struggled none the less madly till the last crumb had been devoured.

In the meantime the astonished team-dogs had burst out of their nests only to be set upon by the fierce invaders. Never had Buck seen such dogs. It seemed as though their bones would burst through their skins. They were mere skeletons, draped loosely in draggled² hides, with blazing eyes and slavered fangs. But the hunger-madness made them terrifying, irresistible. There was no opposing them. The team-dogs were swept back against the cliff at the first onset. Buck was beset by three huskies, and in a trice his head and shoulders were ripped and slashed. The din was frightful. Billee was crying as usual. Dave and Sol-leks, dripping blood from a score of wounds, were fighting bravely side by side. Joe was snapping like a demon. Once, his teeth closed on the fore leg of a husky, and he crunched down through the bone. Pike, the malingerer, leaped upon the crippled animal, breaking its neck with a quick flash of teeth and a jerk. Buck got a frothing adversary by the throat, and was sprayed with blood when his teeth sank through the jugular. The warm taste of it in his mouth goaded him to greater fierceness. He flung himself upon another, and at the same time felt teeth sink into his own throat. It was Spitz, treacherously attacking from the side.

Perrault and François, having cleaned out their part of the camp, hurried to save their sled-dogs. The wild wave of famished beasts rolled back before them, and Buck shook himself free. But it was only for a moment. The two men were compelled to run back to save the grub, upon which the huskies returned to the attack on the team. Billee, terrified into bravery, sprang through the savage circle and fled away over the ice. Pike and Dub followed on his heels, with the rest of the team behind. As Buck

1 There was a Ta'an Kwäch'än village at Upper Laberge on the east side of the lake.

2 Wet and filthy.

drew himself together to spring after them, out of the tail of his eye he saw Spitz rush upon him with the evident intention of overthrowing him. Once off his feet and under that mass of huskies, there was no hope for him. But he braced himself to the shock of Spitz's charge, then joined the flight out on the lake.

Later, the nine team-dogs gathered together and sought shelter in the forest. Though unpursued, they were in a sorry plight. There was not one who was not wounded in four or five places, while some were wounded grievously. Dub was badly injured in a hind leg; Dolly, the last husky added to the team at Dyea, had a badly torn throat; Joe had lost an eye; while Billee, the good-natured, with an ear chewed and rent to ribbons, cried and whimpered throughout the night. At daybreak they limped warily back to camp, to find the marauders gone and the two men in bad tempers. Fully half their grub supply was gone. The huskies had chewed through the sled lashings and canvas coverings. In fact, nothing, no matter how remotely eatable, had escaped them. They had eaten a pair of Perrault's moose-hide moccasins, chunks out of the leather traces, and even two feet of lash from the end of François's whip. He broke from a mournful contemplation of it to look over his wounded dogs.

"Ah, my frien's," he said softly, "mebbe it mek you mad dog, dose many bites. Mebbe all mad dog, sacredam! Wot you t'ink, eh, Perrault?"

The courier shook his head dubiously. With four hundred miles of trail still between him and Dawson,¹ he could ill afford to have madness break out among his dogs. Two hours of cursing and exertion got the harnesses into shape, and the wound-stiffened team was under way, struggling painfully over the hardest part of the trail they had yet encountered, and for that matter, the hardest between them and Dawson.

The Thirty Mile River² was wide open. Its wild water defied the frost, and it was in the eddies only and in the quiet places that the ice held at all. Six days of exhausting toil were required to cover those thirty terrible miles. And terrible they were, for every

1 (Now usually Dawson City), boomtown at the confluence of the Yukon and Klondike Rivers about 379 miles/610 km downstream from Upper Lake Laberge and focus of the Klondike gold rush. It served as the first capital of Canada's YT after this was carved out of the NWT by a parliamentary act of 13 June 1898.

2 Swift-flowing (and hence slow to freeze) 48 km-section of the Yukon River between Lower Lake Laberge and Teslin River.

foot of them was accomplished at the risk of life to dog and man. A dozen times, Perrault, nosing the way, broke through the ice bridges, being saved by the long pole he carried, which he so held that it fell each time across the hole made by his body. But a cold snap was on, the thermometer registering fifty below zero,¹ and each time he broke through he was compelled for very life to build a fire and dry his garments.

Nothing daunted him. It was because nothing daunted him that he had been chosen for government courier. He took all manner of risks, resolutely thrusting his little weazened face into the frost and struggling on from dim dawn to dark. He skirted the frowning shores on rim ice² that bent and crackled under foot and upon which they dared not halt. Once, the sled broke through, with Dave and Buck, and they were half-frozen and all but drowned by the time they were dragged out. The usual fire was necessary to save them. They were coated solidly with ice, and the two men kept them on the run around the fire, sweating and thawing, so close that they were singed by the flames.

At another time Spitz went through, dragging the whole team after him up to Buck, who strained backward with all his strength, his fore paws on the slippery edge and the ice quivering and snapping all around. But behind him was Dave, likewise straining backward, and behind the sled was François, pulling till his tendons cracked.

Again, the rim ice broke away before and behind, and there was no escape except up the cliff. Perrault scaled it by a miracle, while François prayed for just that miracle; and with every thong and sled lashing and the last bit of harness rove³ into a long rope, the dogs were hoisted, one by one, to the cliff crest. François came up last, after the sled and load. Then came the search for a place to descend, which descent was ultimately made by the aid of the rope, and night found them back on the river with a quarter of a mile⁴ to the day's credit.

By the time they made the Hootalinqua⁵ and good ice, Buck was played out. The rest of the dogs were in like condition; but Perrault, to make up lost time, pushed them late and early. The

1 -50°F = -46°C.

2 Ice that forms at the shoreline as a river starts to freeze.

3 Twisted together.

4 402 m.

5 The confluence with the Hootalinqua (now Teslin) River marks the end of the Thirty Mile section of the Yukon River.

first day they covered thirty-five miles to the Big Salmon; the next day thirty-five more to the Little Salmon; the third day forty miles, which brought them well up toward the Five Fingers.¹

Buck's feet were not so compact and hard as the feet of the huskies. His had softened during the many generations since the day his last wild ancestor was tamed by a cave-dweller or river man. All day long he limped in agony, and camp once made, lay down like a dead dog. Hungry as he was, he would not move to receive his ration of fish, which François had to bring to him. Also, the dog-driver rubbed Buck's feet for half an hour each night after supper, and sacrificed the tops of his own moccasins to make four moccasins for Buck. This was a great relief, and Buck caused even the weazened face of Perrault to twist itself into a grin one morning, when François forgot the moccasins and Buck lay on his back, his four feet waving appealingly in the air, and refused to budge without them. Later his feet grew hard to the trail, and the worn-out foot-gear was thrown away.

At the Pelly² one morning, as they were harnessing up, Dolly, who had never been conspicuous for anything, went suddenly mad. She announced her condition by a long, heart-breaking wolf howl that sent every dog bristling with fear, then sprang straight for Buck. He had never seen a dog go mad, nor did he have any reason to fear madness; yet he knew that here was horror, and fled away from it in a panic. Straight away he raced, with Dolly, panting and frothing, one leap behind; nor could she gain on him, so great was his terror, nor could he leave her, so great was her madness. He plunged through the wooded breast of the island, flew down to the lower end, crossed a back channel filled with rough ice to another island, gained a third island, curved back to the main river, and in desperation started to cross it. And all the time, though he did not look, he could hear her snarling just one leap behind. François called to him a quarter of a mile away and he doubled back, still one leap ahead, gasping painfully for air and putting all his faith in that François would save him. The dog-driver held the axe poised in his hand, and as

1 The Big Salmon River meets the Yukon River 33 miles/53 km downstream from Hootalinqua; the confluence of the Little Salmon and Yukon Rivers is 39 miles/63 km downstream from Big Salmon; the Five Fingers is a rapids on the Yukon River 62 miles/99 km downstream from Little Salmon.

2 The Pelly River meets the Yukon River 63 miles/102 km downstream from the Five Finger Rapids.

Buck shot past him the axe crashed down upon mad Dolly's head.

Buck staggered over against the sled, exhausted, sobbing for breath, helpless. This was Spitz's opportunity. He sprang upon Buck, and twice his teeth sank into his unresisting foe and ripped and tore the flesh to the bone. Then François's lash descended, and Buck had the satisfaction of watching Spitz receive the worst whipping as yet administered to any of the team.

"One devil, dat Spitz," remarked Perrault. "Some dam day heem keel dat Buck."

"Dat Buck two devils," was François's rejoinder. "All de tam I watch dat Buck I know for sure. Lissen: some dam fine day heem get mad lak hell an' den heem chew dat Spitz all up an' spit heem out on de snow. Sure. I know."

From then on it was war between them. Spitz, as lead-dog and acknowledged master of the team, felt his supremacy threatened by this strange Southland dog. And strange Buck was to him, for of the many Southland dogs he had known, not one had shown up worthily in camp and on trail. They were all too soft, dying under the toil, the frost, and starvation. Buck was the exception. He alone endured and prospered, matching the husky in strength, savagery, and cunning. Then he was a masterful dog, and what made him dangerous was the fact that the club of the man in the red sweater had knocked all blind pluck and rashness out of his desire for mastery. He was preëminently cunning, and could bide his time with a patience that was nothing less than primitive.

It was inevitable that the clash for leadership should come. Buck wanted it. He wanted it because it was his nature, because he had been gripped tight by that nameless, incomprehensible pride of the trail and trace—that pride which holds dogs in the toil to the last gasp, which lures them to die joyfully in the harness, and breaks their hearts if they are cut out of the harness. This was the pride of Dave as wheel-dog, of Sol-leks as he pulled with all his strength; the pride that laid hold of them at break of camp, transforming them from sour and sullen brutes into straining, eager, ambitious creatures; the pride that spurred them on all day and dropped them at pitch of camp at night, letting them fall back into gloomy unrest and discontent. This was the pride that bore up Spitz and made him thrash the sled-dogs who blundered and shirked in the traces or hid away at harness-up time in the morning. Likewise it was this pride that made him fear Buck as a possible lead-dog. And this was Buck's pride, too.

He openly threatened the other's leadership. He came between him and the shirks he should have punished. And he did it deliberately. One night there was a heavy snowfall, and in the morning Pike, the malingerer, did not appear. He was securely hidden in his nest under a foot of snow. François called him and sought him in vain. Spitz was wild with wrath. He raged through the camp, smelling and digging in every likely place, snarling so frightfully that Pike heard and shivered in his hiding-place.

But when he was at last unearthed, and Spitz flew at him to punish him, Buck flew, with equal rage, in between. So unexpected was it, and so shrewdly managed, that Spitz was hurled backward and off his feet. Pike, who had been trembling abjectly, took heart at this open mutiny, and sprang upon his overthrown leader. Buck, to whom fair play was a forgotten code, likewise sprang upon Spitz. But François, chuckling at the incident while unswerving in the administration of justice, brought his lash down upon Buck with all his might. This failed to drive Buck from his prostrate rival, and the butt of the whip was brought into play. Half-stunned by the blow, Buck was knocked backward and the lash laid upon him again and again, while Spitz roundly punished the many times offending Pike.

In the days that followed, as Dawson grew closer and closer, Buck still continued to interfere between Spitz and the culprits; but he did it craftily, when François was not around. With the covert mutiny of Buck, a general insubordination sprang up and increased. Dave and Sol-leks were unaffected, but the rest of the team went from bad to worse. Things no longer went right. There was continual bickering and jangling. Trouble was always afoot, and at the bottom of it was Buck. He kept François busy, for the dog-driver was in constant apprehension of the life-and-death struggle between the two which he knew must take place sooner or later; and on more than one night the sounds of quarrelling and strife among the other dogs turned him out of his sleeping robe, fearful that Buck and Spitz were at it.

But the opportunity did not present itself, and they pulled into Dawson one dreary afternoon with the great fight still to come. Here were many men, and countless dogs, and Buck found them all at work. It seemed the ordained order of things that dogs should work. All day they swung up and down the main street in long teams, and in the night their jingling bells still went by. They hauled cabin logs and firewood, freighted up to the mines, and did all manner of work that horses did in the Santa Clara Valley. Here and there Buck met Southland dogs, but in the main they

were the wild wolf husky breed. Every night, regularly, at nine, at twelve, at three, they lifted a nocturnal song, a weird and eerie chant, in which it was Buck's delight to join.

With the aurora borealis¹ flaming coldly overhead, or the stars leaping in the frost dance, and the land numb and frozen under its pall of snow, this song of the huskies might have been the defiance of life, only it was pitched in minor key, with long-drawn wailings and half-sobs, and was more the pleading of life, the articulate travail of existence. It was an old song, old as the breed itself—one of the first songs of the younger world in a day when songs were sad. It was invested with the woe of unnumbered generations, this plaint² by which Buck was so strangely stirred. When he moaned and sobbed, it was with the pain of living that was of old the pain of his wild fathers, and the fear and mystery of the cold and dark that was to them fear and mystery. And that he should be stirred by it marked the completeness with which he harked back through the ages of fire and roof to the raw beginnings of life in the howling ages.

Seven days from the time they pulled into Dawson, they dropped down the steep bank by the Barracks³ to the Yukon Trail, and pulled for Dyea and Salt Water.⁴ Perrault was carrying despatches if anything more urgent than those he had brought in;⁵ also, the travel pride had gripped him, and he purposed to make the record trip of the year. Several things favored him in this. The week's rest had recuperated the dogs and put them in thorough trim. The trail they had broken into the country was packed hard by later journeyers. And further, the police had arranged in two or three places deposits of grub for dog and man, and he was travelling light.

They made Sixty Mile,⁶ which is a fifty-mile run, on the first

1 The Northern Lights.

2 Lament.

3 The Dawson barracks formed part of Fort Herchmer, established in 1897 to regulate the gold rush. From 1898 it housed the NWMP and reinforcements from the Canadian militia known as the Yukon Field Force.

4 I.e., they started for the coast; they will actually head for Skagway, not Dyea.

5 The rapidly expanding population of Dawson faced starvation from lack of supplies over the winter of 1897–98, hence the urgency of the despatches.

6 Sixty Mile (now Sixtymile) River joins the Yukon River 42 miles/68 km upstream from Dawson.

day; and the second day saw them booming up the Yukon well on their way to Pelly. But such splendid running was achieved not without great trouble and vexation on the part of François. The insidious revolt led by Buck had destroyed the solidarity of the team. It no longer was as one dog leaping in the traces. The encouragement Buck gave the rebels led them into all kinds of petty misdemeanors. No more was Spitz a leader greatly to be feared. The old awe departed, and they grew equal to challenging his authority. Pike robbed him of half a fish one night, and gulped it down under the protection of Buck. Another night Dub and Joe fought Spitz and made him forego the punishment they deserved. And even Billee, the good-natured, was less good-natured, and whined not half so placatingly as in former days. Buck never came near Spitz without snarling and bristling menacingly. In fact, his conduct approached that of a bully, and he was given to swaggering up and down before Spitz's very nose.

The breaking down of discipline likewise affected the dogs in their relations with one another. They quarrelled and bickered more than ever among themselves, till at times the camp was a howling bedlam. Dave and Sol-leks alone were unaltered, though they were made irritable by the unending squabbling. François swore strange barbarous oaths, and stamped the snow in futile rage, and tore his hair. His lash was always singing among the dogs, but it was of small avail. Directly his back was turned they were at it again. He backed up Spitz with his whip, while Buck backed up the remainder of the team. François knew he was behind all the trouble, and Buck knew he knew; but Buck was too clever ever again to be caught red-handed. He worked faithfully in the harness, for the toil had become a delight to him; yet it was a greater delight slyly to precipitate a fight amongst his mates and tangle the traces.

At the mouth of the Tahkeena,¹ one night after supper, Dub turned up a snowshoe rabbit,² blundered it, and missed. In a

1 (Now Takhini River), a tributary meeting the Yukon River about 388 miles/625 km upstream from Sixty Mile. As Rink Rapids is the next place mentioned on this southward journey, and as there was no NWMP post at Tahkeena Crossing in 1897–98, London almost certainly made a geographical error here. Dyer 166 suggests he intended Selwyn River (about 93 miles/150 km upstream from Sixty Mile), not Tahkeena, and this is very likely as there was briefly an NWMP post at Selwyn during the gold rush.

2 A.k.a. the varying hare (*Lepus americanus*), which has large back feet to stop it sinking into snow and whose fur turns white in winter.

second the whole team was in full cry. A hundred yards¹ away was a camp of the Northwest Police,² with fifty dogs, huskies all, who joined the chase. The rabbit sped down the river, turned off into a small creek, up the frozen bed of which it held steadily. It ran lightly on the surface of the snow, while the dogs ploughed through by main strength.³ Buck led the pack, sixty strong, around bend after bend, but he could not gain. He lay down low to the race, whining eagerly, his splendid body flashing forward, leap by leap, in the wan white moonlight. And leap by leap, like some pale frost wraith, the snowshoe rabbit flashed on ahead.

All that stirring of old instincts which at stated periods drives men out from the sounding cities to forest and plain to kill things by chemically propelled leaden pellets,⁴ the blood lust, the joy to kill—all this was Buck's, only it was infinitely more intimate. He was ranging at the head of the pack, running the wild thing down, the living meat, to kill with his own teeth and wash his muzzle to the eyes in warm blood.

There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive. This ecstasy, this forgetfulness of living, comes to the artist, caught up and out of himself in a sheet of flame; it comes to the soldier, war-mad on a stricken field and refusing quarter; and it came to Buck, leading the pack, sounding the old wolf-cry, straining after the food that was alive and that fled swiftly before him through the moonlight. He was sounding the deeps of his nature, and of the parts of his nature that were deeper than he, going back into the womb of Time. He was mastered by the sheer surging of life, the tidal wave of being, the perfect joy of each separate muscle, joint, and sinew in that it was everything that was not death, that it was aglow and rampant, expressing itself in movement, flying exultantly under the stars and over the face of dead matter that did not move.

But Spitz, cold and calculating even in his supreme moods, left the pack and cut across a narrow neck of land where the creek made a long bend around. Buck did not know of this, and as he rounded the bend, the frost wraith of a rabbit still flitting before

1 91 m.

2 I.e., the NWMP, the frontier force that was the ancestor of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (the RCMP or "Mounties").

3 By physical force exerted to the maximum.

4 I.e., to hunt with shotguns.

him, he saw another and larger frost wraith leap from the overhanging bank into the immediate path of the rabbit. It was Spitz. The rabbit could not turn, and as the white teeth broke its back in mid air it shrieked as loudly as a stricken man may shriek. At sound of this, the cry of Life plunging down from Life's apex in the grip of Death, the full pack at Buck's heels raised a hell's chorus of delight.

Buck did not cry out. He did not check himself, but drove in upon Spitz, shoulder to shoulder, so hard that he missed the throat. They rolled over and over in the powdery snow. Spitz gained his feet almost as though he had not been overthrown, slashing Buck down the shoulder and leaping clear. Twice his teeth clipped together, like the steel jaws of a trap, as he backed away for better footing, with lean and lifting lips that writhed and snarled.

In a flash Buck knew it. The time had come. It was to the death. As they circled about, snarling, ears laid back, keenly watchful for the advantage, the scene came to Buck with a sense of familiarity. He seemed to remember it all,—the white woods, and earth, and moonlight, and the thrill of battle. Over the whiteness and silence brooded a ghostly calm. There was not the faintest whisper of air—nothing moved, not a leaf quivered, the visible breaths of the dogs rising slowly and lingering in the frosty air. They had made short work of the snowshoe rabbit, these dogs that were ill-tamed wolves; and they were now drawn up in an expectant circle. They, too, were silent, their eyes only gleaming and their breaths drifting slowly upward. To Buck it was nothing new or strange, this scene of old time. It was as though it had always been, the wonted way of things.

Spitz was a practised fighter. From Spitzbergen through the Arctic, and across Canada and the Barrens, he had held his own with all manner of dogs and achieved to mastery over them. Bitter rage was his, but never blind rage. In passion to rend and destroy, he never forgot that his enemy was in like passion to rend and destroy. He never rushed till he was prepared to receive a rush; never attacked till he had first defended that attack.

In vain Buck strove to sink his teeth in the neck of the big white dog. Wherever his fangs struck for the softer flesh, they were countered by the fangs of Spitz. Fang clashed fang, and lips were cut and bleeding, but Buck could not penetrate his enemy's guard. Then he warmed up and enveloped Spitz in a whirlwind of rushes. Time and time again he tried for the snow-white

throat, where life bubbled near to the surface, and each time and every time Spitz slashed him and got away. Then Buck took to rushing, as though for the throat, when, suddenly drawing back his head and curving in from the side, he would drive his shoulder at the shoulder of Spitz, as a ram by which to overthrow him. But instead, Buck's shoulder was slashed down each time as Spitz leaped lightly away.

Spitz was untouched, while Buck was streaming with blood and panting hard. The fight was growing desperate. And all the while the silent and wolfish circle waited to finish off whichever dog went down. As Buck grew winded, Spitz took to rushing, and he kept him staggering for footing. Once Buck went over, and the whole circle of sixty dogs started up; but he recovered himself, almost in mid air, and the circle sank down again and waited.

But Buck possessed a quality that made for greatness—imagination. He fought by instinct, but he could fight by head as well. He rushed, as though attempting the old shoulder trick, but at the last instant swept low to the snow and in. His teeth closed on Spitz's left fore leg. There was a crunch of breaking bone, and the white dog faced him on three legs. Thrice he tried to knock him over, then repeated the trick and broke the right fore leg. Despite the pain and helplessness, Spitz struggled madly to keep up. He saw the silent circle, with gleaming eyes, lolling tongues, and silvery breaths drifting upward, closing in upon him as he had seen similar circles close in upon beaten antagonists in the past. Only this time he was the one who was beaten.

There was no hope for him. Buck was inexorable. Mercy was a thing reserved for gentler climes. He manœuvred for the final rush. The circle had tightened till he could feel the breaths of the huskies on his flanks. He could see them, beyond Spitz and to either side, half crouching for the spring, their eyes fixed upon him. A pause seemed to fall. Every animal was motionless as though turned to stone. Only Spitz quivered and bristled as he staggered back and forth, snarling with horrible menace, as though to frighten off impending death. Then Buck sprang in and out; but while he was in, shoulder had at last squarely met shoulder. The dark circle became a dot on the moon-flooded snow as Spitz disappeared from view. Buck stood and looked on, the successful champion, the dominant primordial beast who had made his kill and found it good.

IV

Who Has Won to Mastership

"Eh? Wot I say? I spik true w'en I say dat Buck two devils."

This was François's speech next morning when he discovered Spitz missing and Buck covered with wounds. He drew him to the fire and by its light pointed them out.

"Dat Spitz fight lak hell," said Perrault, as he surveyed the gaping rips and cuts.

"An' dat Buck fight lak two hells," was François's answer. "An' now we make good time. No more Spitz, no more trouble, sure."

While Perrault packed the camp outfit and loaded the sled, the dog-driver proceeded to harness the dogs. Buck trotted up to the place Spitz would have occupied as leader; but François, not noticing him, brought Sol-leks to the coveted position. In his judgment, Sol-leks was the best lead-dog left. Buck sprang upon Sol-leks in a fury, driving him back and standing in his place.

"Eh? eh?" François cried, slapping his thighs gleefully. "Look at dat Buck. Heem keel dat Spitz, heem t'ink to take de job."

"Go 'way, Chook!"¹ he cried, but Buck refused to budge.

He took Buck by the scruff of the neck, and though the dog growled threateningly, dragged him to one side and replaced Sol-leks. The old dog did not like it, and showed plainly that he was afraid of Buck. François was obdurate, but when he turned his back Buck again displaced Sol-leks, who was not at all unwilling to go.

François was angry. "Now, by Gar, I feex you!" he cried, coming back with a heavy club in his hand.

Buck remembered the man in the red sweater, and retreated slowly; nor did he attempt to charge in when Sol-leks was once more brought forward. But he circled just beyond the range of the club, snarling with bitterness and rage; and while he circled he watched the club so as to dodge it if thrown by François, for he was become wise in the way of clubs.

The driver went about his work, and he called to Buck when he was ready to put him in his old place in front of Dave. Buck retreated two or three steps. François followed him up, whereupon he again retreated. After some time of this, François threw down the club, thinking that Buck feared a thrashing. But Buck was in open revolt. He wanted, not to escape a clubbing, but to

1 "Chook!" ("Go away!") possibly derives from a Tlingit word (see Dyer 169).

have the leadership. It was his by right. He had earned it, and he would not be content with less.

Perrault took a hand. Between them they ran him about for the better part of an hour. They threw clubs at him. He dodged. They cursed him, and his fathers and mothers before him, and all his seed to come after him down to the remotest generation, and every hair on his body and drop of blood in his veins; and he answered curse with snarl and kept out of their reach. He did not try to run away, but retreated around and around the camp, advertising plainly that when his desire was met, he would come in and be good.

François sat down and scratched his head. Perrault looked at his watch and swore. Time was flying, and they should have been on the trail an hour gone. François scratched his head again. He shook it and grinned sheepishly at the courier, who shrugged his shoulders in sign that they were beaten. Then François went up to where Sol-leks stood and called to Buck. Buck laughed, as dogs laugh, yet kept his distance. François unfastened Sol-leks's traces and put him back in his old place. The team stood harnessed to the sled in an unbroken line, ready for the trail. There was no place for Buck save at the front. Once more François called, and once more Buck laughed and kept away.

"T'row down de club," Perrault commanded.

François complied, whereupon Buck trotted in, laughing triumphantly, and swung around into position at the head of the team. His traces were fastened, the sled broken out,¹ and with both men running they dashed out on to the river trail.

Highly as the dog-driver had forevalued Buck, with his two devils, he found, while the day was yet young, that he had undervalued. At a bound Buck took up the duties of leadership; and where judgment was required, and quick thinking and quick acting, he showed himself the superior even of Spitz, of whom François had never seen an equal.

But it was in giving the law and making his mates live up to it, that Buck excelled. Dave and Sol-leks did not mind the change in leadership. It was none of their business. Their business was to toil, and toil mightily, in the traces. So long as that were not interfered with, they did not care what happened. Billee, the good-natured, could lead for all they cared, so long as he kept order. The rest of the team, however, had grown unruly during the last

1 I.e., ice freezing the sled's runners to the ground was broken using the leverage of the gee-pole.

days of Spitz, and their surprise was great now that Buck proceeded to lick them into shape.

Pike, who pulled at Buck's heels, and who never put an ounce more of his weight against the breast-band than he was compelled to do, was swiftly and repeatedly shaken for loafing; and ere the first day was done he was pulling more than ever before in his life. The first night in camp, Joe, the sour one, was punished soundly—a thing that Spitz had never succeeded in doing. Buck simply smothered him by virtue of superior weight, and cut him up till he ceased snapping and began to whine for mercy.

The general tone of the team picked up immediately. It recovered its old-time solidarity, and once more the dogs leaped as one dog in the traces. At the Rink Rapids¹ two native huskies, Teek and Koonah, were added; and the celerity with which Buck broke them in took away François's breath.

"Nevaire such a dog as dat Buck!" he cried. "No, nevaire! Heem worth one t'ousan' dollair, by Gar! Eh? Wot you say, Perrault?"

And Perrault nodded. He was ahead of the record then, and gaining day by day. The trail was in excellent condition, well packed and hard, and there was no new-fallen snow with which to contend. It was not too cold. The temperature dropped to fifty below zero and remained there the whole trip. The men rode and ran by turn, and the dogs were kept on the jump, with but infrequent stoppages.

The Thirty Mile River² was comparatively coated with ice, and they covered in one day going out what had taken them ten days coming in. In one run they made a sixty-mile dash from the foot of Lake Le Barge to the White Horse Rapids.³ Across Marsh, Tagish, and Bennett⁴ (seventy miles of lakes), they flew so fast

1 Rapids 87 miles/140 km upstream from Selwyn (see *CW* 80, note 1 above).

2 From Rink Rapids to the now frozen Thirty Mile (see *CW* 74, note 2) is 134 miles/215 km.

3 These rapids were just upstream of modern Whitehorse, YT (to which they gave their name); since 1958 they have been submerged under a reservoir. From Lower Laberge to the White Horse Rapids was about 61 miles/98 km.

4 These lakes are now considered headwaters of the Yukon River, which emerges from Marsh Lake 25 miles/40 km upstream from Whitehorse. (Until 1949 the upper Yukon from Marsh Lake to Pelly was officially known as the Lewes River.) Tagish Lake, farther upstream, straddles YT and BC; Bennett Lake straddles the same border farther upstream still. From Lower Marsh to Upper Bennett is about 75 miles/120 km.

that the man whose turn it was to run towed behind the sled at the end of a rope. And on the last night of the second week they topped White Pass and dropped down the sea slope with the lights of Skaguay¹ and of the shipping at their feet.

It was a record run. Each day for fourteen days they had averaged forty miles.² For three days Perrault and François threw chests up and down the main street of Skaguay and were deluged with invitations to drink, while the team was the constant centre of a worshipful crowd of dog-busters and mushers.³ Then three or four western bad men aspired to clean out the town, were riddled like pepper-boxes for their pains, and public interest turned to other idols. Next came official orders. François called Buck to him, threw his arms around him, wept over him. And that was the last of François and Perrault. Like other men, they passed out of Buck's life for good.

A Scotch half-breed took charge of him and his mates, and in company with a dozen other dog-teams he started back over the weary trail to Dawson. It was no light running now, nor record time, but heavy toil each day, with a heavy load behind; for this was the mail train, carrying word from the world to the men who sought gold under the shadow of the Pole.

Buck did not like it, but he bore up well to the work, taking pride in it after the manner of Dave and Sol-leks, and seeing that his mates, whether they prided in it or not, did their fair share. It was a monotonous life, operating with machine-like regularity. One day was very like another. At a certain time each morning the cooks turned out, fires were built, and breakfast was eaten. Then, while some broke camp, others harnessed the dogs, and they were under way an hour or so before the darkness fell which gave warning of dawn. At night, camp was made. Some pitched the flies, others cut firewood and pine boughs for the beds, and still others carried water or ice for the cooks. Also, the dogs were fed. To them, this was the one feature of the day, though it was

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- 1 White Pass (elevation 2,864 feet/873 m), which joins the Chilkoot Trail near Lindeman Lake, traverses the Coast Mountains from Bennett to Skagway (as it is now spelled) (see Appendix J Map 3). In 1898 Skagway, with its deep-water harbour, was already starting to supplant Dyea, and in August 1900 the newly opened White Pass and Yukon railroad line obviated the need for dog-sled traffic over White Pass.
 - 2 Dawson to Skagway via White Pass was about 588 miles/947 km or an average of 42 miles per day, so the dogs' achievement is slightly understated.
 - 3 Dog-tamers and dog-sled drivers.

good to loaf around, after the fish was eaten, for an hour or so with the other dogs, of which there were fivescore and odd.¹ There were fierce fighters among them, but three battles with the fiercest brought Buck to mastery, so that when he bristled and showed his teeth, they got out of his way.

Best of all, perhaps, he loved to lie near the fire, hind legs crouched under him, fore legs stretched out in front, head raised, and eyes blinking dreamily at the flames. Sometimes he thought of Judge Miller's big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley, and of the cement swimming-tank, and Ysabel, the Mexican hairless, and Toots, the Japanese pug; but oftener he remembered the man in the red sweater, the death of Curly, the great fight with Spitz, and the good things he had eaten or would like to eat. He was not homesick. The Sunland was very dim and distant, and such memories had no power over him. Far more potent were the memories of his heredity that gave things he had never seen before a seeming familiarity; the instincts (which were but the memories of his ancestors become habits) which had lapsed in later days, and still later, in him, quickened and become alive again.

Sometimes as he crouched there, blinking dreamily at the flames, it seemed that the flames were of another fire, and that as he crouched by this other fire he saw another and different man from the half-breed cook before him. This other man² was shorter of leg and longer of arm, with muscles that were stringy and knotty rather than rounded and swelling. The hair of this man was long and matted, and his head slanted back under it from the eyes. He uttered strange sounds, and seemed very much afraid of the darkness, into which he peered continually, clutching in his hand, which hung midway between knee and foot, a stick with a heavy stone made fast to the end. He was all but naked, a ragged and fire-scorched skin hanging part way down his back, but on his body there was much hair.³ In some places, across the chest and shoulders and down the outside of the arms and thighs, it was matted into almost a thick fur. He did not stand

1 Just over a hundred.

2 What follows is a description of the Neanderthal-like prehistoric man who supposedly first domesticated the dog. It is now believed that dogs were first domesticated by anatomically modern human beings about 10,000 years ago, long after the Neanderthals had become extinct.

3 For the hairiness of early man and its possible function, see Darwin, *Descent* 1:193, 1:206.

erect, but with trunk inclined forward from the hips, on legs that bent at the knees. About his body there was a peculiar springiness, or resiliency, almost catlike, and a quick alertness as of one who lived in perpetual fear of things seen and unseen.

At other times this hairy man squatted by the fire with head between his legs and slept. On such occasions his elbows were on his knees, his hands clasped above his head as though to shed rain by the hairy arms. And beyond that fire, in the circling darkness, Buck could see many gleaming coals, two by two, always two by two, which he knew to be the eyes of great beasts of prey. And he could hear the crashing of their bodies through the undergrowth, and the noises they made in the night. And dreaming there by the Yukon bank, with lazy eyes blinking at the fire, these sounds and sights of another world would make the hair to rise along his back and stand on end across his shoulders and up his neck, till he whimpered low and suppressedly, or growled softly, and the half-breed cook shouted at him, "Hey, you Buck, wake up!" Whereupon the other world would vanish and the real world come into his eyes, and he would get up and yawn and stretch as though he had been asleep.

It was a hard trip, with the mail behind them, and the heavy work wore them down. They were short of weight and in poor condition when they made Dawson, and should have had a ten days' or a week's rest at least. But in two days' time they dropped down the Yukon bank from the Barracks, loaded with letters for the outside. The dogs were tired, the drivers grumbling, and to make matters worse, it snowed every day. This meant a soft trail, greater friction on the runners, and heavier pulling for the dogs; yet the drivers were fair through it all, and did their best for the animals.

Each night the dogs were attended to first. They ate before the drivers ate, and no man sought his sleeping-robe till he had seen to the feet of the dogs he drove. Still, their strength went down. Since the beginning of the winter they had travelled eighteen hundred miles,¹ dragging sleds the whole weary distance; and eighteen hundred miles will tell upon life of the toughest. Buck stood it, keeping his mates up to their work and maintaining discipline, though he, too, was very tired. Billee cried and whimpered regularly in his sleep each night. Joe was sourer than ever, and Sol-leks was unapproachable, blind side or other side.

1 The approximate distance (2,897 km) from Dyea to Dawson, back to Skagway, and back again to Dawson.

But it was Dave who suffered most of all. Something had gone wrong with him. He became more morose and irritable, and when camp was pitched at once made his nest, where his driver fed him. Once out of the harness and down, he did not get on his feet again till harness-up time in the morning. Sometimes, in the traces, when jerked by a sudden stoppage of the sled, or by straining to start it, he would cry out with pain. The driver examined him, but could find nothing. All the drivers became interested in his case. They talked it over at meal-time, and over their last pipes before going to bed, and one night they held a consultation. He was brought from his nest to the fire and was pressed and prodded till he cried out many times. Something was wrong inside, but they could locate no broken bones, could not make it out.

By the time Cassiar Bar¹ was reached, he was so weak that he was falling repeatedly in the traces. The Scotch half-breed called a halt and took him out of the team, making the next dog, Sol-leks, fast to the sled. His intention was to rest Dave, letting him run free behind the sled. Sick as he was, Dave resented being taken out, grunting and growling while the traces were unfastened, and whimpering broken-heartedly when he saw Sol-leks in the position he had held and served so long. For the pride of trace and trail was his, and, sick unto death, he could not bear that another dog should do his work.

When the sled started, he floundered in the soft snow alongside the beaten trail, attacking Sol-leks with his teeth, rushing against him and trying to thrust him off into the soft snow on the other side, striving to leap inside his traces and get between him and the sled, and all the while whining and yelping and crying with grief and pain. The half-breed tried to drive him away with the whip; but he paid no heed to the stinging lash, and the man had not the heart to strike harder. Dave refused to run quietly on the trail behind the sled, where the going was easy, but continued to flounder alongside in the soft snow, where the going was most difficult, till exhausted. Then he fell, and lay where he fell, howling lugubriously as the long train of sleds churned by.

With the last remnant of his strength he managed to stagger along behind till the train made another stop, when he floundered past the sleds to his own, where he stood alongside Sol-leks. His driver lingered a moment to get a light for his pipe from

1 A gravel bar on the Yukon River where gold was discovered in 1884, 25 miles/41 km downstream from Hootalinqua.

the man behind. Then he returned and started his dogs. They swung out on the trail with remarkable lack of exertion, turned their heads uneasily, and stopped in surprise. The driver was surprised, too; the sled had not moved. He called his comrades to witness the sight. Dave had bitten through both of Sol-leks's traces, and was standing directly in front of the sled in his proper place.

He pleaded with his eyes to remain there. The driver was perplexed. His comrades talked of how a dog could break its heart through being denied the work that killed it, and recalled instances they had known, where dogs, too old for the toil, or injured, had died because they were cut out of the traces. Also, they held it a mercy, since Dave was to die anyway, that he should die in the traces, heart-easy and content. So he was harnessed in again, and proudly he pulled as of old, though more than once he cried out involuntarily from the bite of his inward hurt. Several times he fell down and was dragged in the traces, and once the sled ran upon him so that he limped thereafter in one of his hind legs.

But he held out till camp was reached, when his driver made a place for him by the fire. Morning found him too weak to travel. At harness-up time he tried to crawl to his driver. By convulsive efforts he got on his feet, staggered, and fell. Then he wormed his way forward slowly toward where the harnesses were being put on his mates. He would advance his fore legs and drag up his body with a sort of hitching movement, when he would advance his fore legs and hitch ahead again for a few more inches. His strength left him, and the last his mates saw of him he lay gasping in the snow and yearning toward them. But they could hear him mournfully howling till they passed out of sight behind a belt of river timber.

Here the train was halted. The Scotch half-breed slowly retraced his steps to the camp they had left. The men ceased talking. A revolver-shot rang out. The man came back hurriedly. The whips snapped, the bells tinkled merrily, the sleds churned along the trail; but Buck knew, and every dog knew, what had taken place behind the belt of river trees.

V

The Toil of Trace and Trail

Thirty days from the time it left Dawson, the Salt Water Mail, with Buck and his mates at the fore, arrived at Skaguay. They were in a wretched state, worn out and worn down. Buck's one

hundred and forty pounds had dwindled to one hundred and fifteen.¹ The rest of his mates, though lighter dogs, had relatively lost more weight than he. Pike, the malingerer, who, in his lifetime of deceit, had often successfully feigned a hurt leg, was now limping in earnest. Sol-leks was limping, and Dub was suffering from a wrenched shoulder-blade.

They were all terribly footsore. No spring or rebound was left in them. Their feet fell heavily on the trail, jarring their bodies and doubling the fatigue of a day's travel. There was nothing the matter with them except that they were dead tired. It was not the dead-tiredness that comes through brief and excessive effort, from which recovery is a matter of hours; but it was the dead-tiredness that comes through the slow and prolonged strength drainage of months of toil. There was no power of recuperation left, no reserve strength to call upon. It had been all used, the last least bit of it. Every muscle, every fibre, every cell, was tired, dead tired. And there was reason for it. In less than five months they had travelled twenty-five hundred miles, during the last eighteen hundred of which they had had but five days' rest.² When they arrived at Skaguay they were apparently on their last legs. They could barely keep the traces taut, and on the down grades just managed to keep out of the way of the sled.

"Mush on, poor sore feets," the driver encouraged them as they tottered down the main street of Skaguay. "Dis is de las'. Den we get one long res'. Eh? For sure. One bully long res'."

The drivers confidently expected a long stopover. Themselves, they had covered twelve hundred miles³ with two days' rest, and in the nature of reason and common justice they deserved an interval of loafing. But so many were the men who had rushed into the Klondike, and so many were the sweethearts, wives, and kin that had not rushed in, that the congested mail was taking on Alpine proportions; also, there were official orders. Fresh batches of Hudson Bay dogs⁴ were to take the places of those worthless for the trail. The worthless ones were to be got rid of, and, since dogs count for little against dollars, they were to be sold.

Three days passed, by which time Buck and his mates found how really tired and weak they were. Then, on the morning of the

1 52 kg.

2 2,500 miles (4,023 km) is the approximate total distance of two journeys from Salt Water to Dawson and back.

3 1,931 km.

4 I.e., "inside" dogs, inured to Northland conditions (see Appendix D2).

fourth day, two men from the States came along and bought them, harness and all, for a song. The men addressed each other as "Hal" and "Charles." Charles was a middle-aged, lightish-colored man, with weak and watery eyes and a mustache that twisted fiercely and vigorously up, giving the lie to the limply drooping lip it concealed. Hal was a youngster of nineteen or twenty, with a big Colt's revolver and a hunting-knife strapped about him on a belt that fairly bristled with cartridges. This belt was the most salient thing about him. It advertised his callowness—a callowness sheer and unutterable. Both men were manifestly out of place, and why such as they should adventure the North is part of the mystery of things that passes understanding.

Buck heard the chaffering,¹ saw the money pass between the man and the Government agent, and knew that the Scotch half-breed and the mail-train drivers were passing out of his life on the heels of Perrault and François and the others who had gone before. When driven with his mates to the new owners' camp, Buck saw a slipshod and slovenly affair, tent half stretched, dishes unwashed, everything in disorder; also, he saw a woman. "Mercedes" the men called her. She was Charles's wife and Hal's sister—a nice family party.

Buck watched them apprehensively as they proceeded to take down the tent and load the sled. There was a great deal of effort about their manner, but no businesslike method. The tent was rolled into an awkward bundle three times as large as it should have been. The tin dishes were packed away unwashed. Mercedes continually fluttered in the way of her men and kept up an unbroken chattering of remonstrance and advice. When they put a clothes-sack on the front of the sled, she suggested it should go on the back; and when they had it put on the back, and covered it over with a couple of other bundles, she discovered overlooked articles which could abide nowhere else but in that very sack, and they unloaded again.

Three men from a neighboring tent came out and looked on, grinning and winking at one another.

"You've got a right smart load as it is," said one of them; "and it's not me should tell you your business, but I wouldn't tote that tent along if I was you."

"Undreamed of!" cried Mercedes, throwing up her hands in dainty dismay. "However in the world could I manage without a tent?"

1 Hagglng.

"It's springtime, and you won't get any more cold weather," the man replied.

She shook her head decidedly, and Charles and Hal put the last odds and ends on top the mountainous load.

"Think it'll ride?" one of the men asked.

"Why shouldn't it?" Charles demanded rather shortly.

"Oh, that's all right, that's all right," the man hastened meekly to say. "I was just a-wonderin', that is all. It seemed a mite top-heavy."

Charles turned his back and drew the lashings down as well as he could, which was not in the least well.

"An' of course the dogs can hike along all day with that contraption behind them," affirmed a second of the men.

"Certainly," said Hal, with freezing politeness, taking hold of the gee-pole with one hand and swinging his whip from the other. "Mush!" he shouted. "Mush on there!"

The dogs sprang against the breast-bands, strained hard for a few moments, then relaxed. They were unable to move the sled.

"The lazy brutes, I'll show them," he cried, preparing to lash out at them with the whip.

But Mercedes interfered, crying, "Oh, Hal, you mustn't," as she caught hold of the whip and wrenched it from him. "The poor dears! Now you must promise you won't be harsh with them for the rest of the trip, or I won't go a step."

"Precious lot you know about dogs," her brother sneered; "and I wish you'd leave me alone. They're lazy, I tell you, and you've got to whip them to get anything out of them. That's their way. You ask anyone. Ask one of those men."

Mercedes looked at them imploringly, untold repugnance at sight of pain written in her pretty face.

"They're weak as water, if you want to know," came the reply from one of the men. "Plum tuckered out, that's what's the matter. They need a rest."

"Rest be blanked,"¹ said Hal, with his beardless lips; and Mercedes said, "Oh!" in pain and sorrow at the oath.

But she was a clannish creature, and rushed at once to the defence of her brother. "Never mind that man," she said pointedly. "You're driving our dogs, and you do what you think best with them."

Again Hal's whip fell upon the dogs. They threw themselves

1 Hal's profanity, "Rest be damned," has been bowdlerized (see Appendix G13).

against the breast-bands, dug their feet into the packed snow, got down low to it, and put forth all their strength. The sled held as though it were an anchor. After two efforts, they stood still, panting. The whip was whistling savagely, when once more Mercedes interfered. She dropped on her knees before Buck, with tears in her eyes, and put her arms around his neck.

"You poor, poor dears," she cried sympathetically, "why don't you pull hard?—then you wouldn't be whipped." Buck did not like her, but he was feeling too miserable to resist her, taking it as part of the day's miserable work.

One of the onlookers, who had been clenching his teeth to suppress hot speech, now spoke up:—

"It's not that I care a whoop what becomes of you, but for the dogs' sakes I just want to tell you, you can help them a mighty lot by breaking out that sled. The runners are froze fast. Throw your weight against the gee-pole, right and left, and break it out."

A third time the attempt was made, but this time, following the advice, Hal broke out the runners which had been frozen to the snow. The overloaded and unwieldy sled forged ahead, Buck and his mates struggling frantically under the rain of blows. A hundred yards¹ ahead the path turned and sloped steeply into the main street. It would have required an experienced man to keep the top-heavy sled upright, and Hal was not such a man. As they swung on the turn the sled went over, spilling half its load through the loose lashings. The dogs never stopped. The lightened sled bounded on its side behind them. They were angry because of the ill treatment they had received and the unjust load. Buck was raging. He broke into a run, the team following his lead. Hal cried "Whoa! whoa!" but they gave no heed. He tripped and was pulled off his feet. The capsized sled ground over him, and the dogs dashed on up the street, adding to the gayety of Skaguay as they scattered the remainder of the outfit along its chief thoroughfare.

Kind-hearted citizens caught the dogs and gathered up the scattered belongings. Also, they gave advice. Half the load and twice the dogs, if they ever expected to reach Dawson, was what was said. Hal and his sister and brother-in-law listened unwillingly, pitched tent, and overhauled the outfit. Canned goods were turned out that made men laugh, for canned goods on the Long Trail is a thing to dream about. "Blankets for a hotel," quoth one of the men who laughed and helped. "Half as many is too much;

1 91 m.

get rid of them. Throw away that tent, and all those dishes,—who's going to wash them, anyway? Good Lord, do you think you're travelling on a Pullman?"¹

And so it went, the inexorable elimination of the superfluous. Mercedes cried when her clothes-bags were dumped on the ground and article after article was thrown out. She cried in general, and she cried in particular over each discarded thing. She clasped hands about knees, rocking back and forth broken-heartedly. She averred she would not go an inch, not for a dozen Charleses. She appealed to everybody and to everything, finally wiping her eyes and proceeding to cast out even articles of apparel that were imperative necessities. And in her zeal, when she had finished with her own, she attacked the belongings of her men and went through them like a tornado.

This accomplished, the outfit, though cut in half, was still a formidable bulk. Charles and Hal went out in the evening and bought six Outside dogs.² These, added to the six of the original team, and Teek and Koona, the huskies obtained at the Rink Rapids on the record trip, brought the team up to fourteen. But the Outside dogs, though practically broken in since their landing, did not amount to much. Three were short-haired pointers,³ one was a Newfoundland, and the other two were mongrels of indeterminate breed. They did not seem to know anything, these newcomers. Buck and his comrades looked upon them with disgust, and though he speedily taught them their places and what not to do, he could not teach them what to do. They did not take kindly to trace and trail. With the exception of the two mongrels, they were bewildered and spirit-broken by the strange savage environment in which they found themselves and by the ill treatment they had received. The two mongrels were without spirit at all; bones were the only things breakable about them.

With the newcomers hopeless and forlorn, and the old team worn out by twenty-five hundred miles of continuous trail, the outlook was anything but bright. The two men, however, were quite cheerful. And they were proud, too. They were doing the thing in style, with fourteen dogs. They had seen other sleds depart over the Pass⁴ for Dawson, or come in from Dawson, but never had they seen a sled with so many as fourteen dogs. In the

1 A luxurious rail-car.

2 Dogs, like Buck, raised outside the Northland (see Appendix D2).

3 Mild-mannered hunting dogs of English origin.

4 I.e., White Pass.

nature of Arctic travel there was a reason why fourteen dogs should not drag one sled, and that was that one sled could not carry the food for fourteen dogs. But Charles and Hal did not know this. They had worked the trip out with a pencil, so much to a dog, so many dogs, so many days, Q.E.D.¹ Mercedes looked over their shoulders and nodded comprehensively, it was all so very simple.

Late next morning Buck led the long team up the street. There was nothing lively about it, no snap or go in him and his fellows. They were starting dead weary. Four times he had covered the distance between Salt Water and Dawson, and the knowledge that, jaded and tired, he was facing the same trail once more, made him bitter. His heart was not in the work, nor was the heart of any dog. The Outsides were timid and frightened, the Insides without confidence in their masters.

Buck felt vaguely that there was no depending upon these two men and the woman. They did not know how to do anything, and as the days went by it became apparent that they could not learn. They were slack in all things, without order or discipline. It took them half the night to pitch a slovenly camp, and half the morning to break that camp and get the sled loaded in fashion so slovenly that for the rest of the day they were occupied in stopping and rearranging the load. Some days they did not make ten miles.² On other days they were unable to get started at all. And on no day did they succeed in making more than half the distance used by the men as a basis in their dog-food computation.

It was inevitable that they should go short on dog-food. But they hastened it by overfeeding, bringing the day nearer when underfeeding would commence. The Outside dogs, whose digestions had not been trained by chronic famine to make the most of little, had voracious appetites. And when, in addition to this, the worn-out huskies pulled weakly, Hal decided that the orthodox ration was too small. He doubled it. And to cap it all, when Mercedes, with tears in her pretty eyes and a quaver in her throat, could not cajole him into giving the dogs still more, she stole from the fish-sacks and fed them slyly. But it was not food that Buck and the huskies needed, but rest. And though they were

1 This abbreviation for *Quod erat demonstrandum* (Latin for "Which was to be demonstrated") is normally placed at the end of a mathematical proof; here it is used to suggest that there can be no argument about the calculations.

2 16 km.

making poor time, the heavy load they dragged sapped their strength severely.

Then came the underfeeding. Hal awoke one day to the fact that his dog-food was half gone and the distance only quarter covered; further, that for love or money no additional dog-food was to be obtained. So he cut down even the orthodox ration and tried to increase the day's travel. His sister and brother-in-law seconded him; but they were frustrated by their heavy outfit and their own incompetence. It was a simple matter to give the dogs less food; but it was impossible to make the dogs travel faster, while their own inability to get under way earlier in the morning prevented them from travelling longer hours. Not only did they not know how to work dogs, but they did not know how to work themselves.

The first to go was Dub. Poor blundering thief that he was, always getting caught and punished, he had none the less been a faithful worker. His wrenched shoulder-blade, untreated and unrested, went from bad to worse, till finally Hal shot him with the big Colt's revolver. It is a saying of the country that an Outside dog starves to death on the ration of the husky, so the six Outside dogs under Buck could do no less than die on half the ration of the husky. The Newfoundland went first, followed by the three short-haired pointers, the two mongrels hanging more grittily on to life, but going in the end.

By this time all the amenities and gentlenesses of the Southland had fallen away from the three people. Shorn of its glamour and romance, Arctic travel became to them a reality too harsh for their manhood and womanhood. Mercedes ceased weeping over the dogs, being too occupied with weeping over herself and with quarrelling with her husband and brother. To quarrel was the one thing they were never too weary to do. Their irritability arose out of their misery, increased with it, doubled upon it, outdistanced it. The wonderful patience of the trail which comes to men who toil hard and suffer sore, and remain sweet of speech and kindly, did not come to these two men and the woman. They had no inkling of such a patience. They were stiff and in pain; their muscles ached, their bones ached, their very hearts ached; and because of this they became sharp of speech, and hard words were first on their lips in the morning and last at night.

Charles and Hal wrangled whenever Mercedes gave them a chance. It was the cherished belief of each that he did more than his share of the work, and neither forbore to speak this belief at every opportunity. Sometimes Mercedes sided with her husband,

sometimes with her brother. The result was a beautiful and unending family quarrel. Starting from a dispute as to which should chop a few sticks for the fire (a dispute which concerned only Charles and Hal), presently would be lugged in the rest of the family, fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins, people thousands of miles away, and some of them dead. That Hal's views on art, or the sort of society plays his mother's brother wrote, should have anything to do with the chopping of a few sticks of firewood, passes comprehension; nevertheless the quarrel was as likely to tend in that direction as in the direction of Charles's political prejudices. And that Charles's sister's tale-bearing tongue should be relevant to the building of a Yukon fire, was apparent only to Mercedes, who disburdened herself of copious opinions upon that topic, and incidentally upon a few other traits unpleasantly peculiar to her husband's family. In the meantime the fire remained unbuilt, the camp half pitched, and the dogs unfed.

Mercedes nursed a special grievance—the grievance of sex. She was pretty and soft, and had been chivalrously treated all her days. But the present treatment by her husband and brother was everything save chivalrous. It was her custom to be helpless. They complained. Upon which impeachment of what to her was her most essential sex-prerogative, she made their lives unendurable. She no longer considered the dogs, and because she was sore and tired, she persisted in riding on the sled. She was pretty and soft, but she weighed one hundred and twenty pounds¹—a lusty last straw to the load dragged by the weak and starving animals. She rode for days, till they fell in the traces and the sled stood still. Charles and Hal begged her to get off and walk, pleaded with her, entreated, the while she wept and importuned Heaven with a recital of their brutality.

On one occasion they took her off the sled by main strength. They never did it again. She let her legs go limp like a spoiled child, and sat down on the trail. They went on their way, but she did not move. After they had travelled three miles² they unloaded the sled, came back for her, and by main strength put her on the sled again.

In the excess of their own misery they were callous to the suffering of their animals. Hal's theory, which he practised on others, was that one must get hardened. He had started out preaching it to his sister and brother-in-law. Failing there, he

1 54 kg.

2 5 km.

hammered it into the dogs with a club. At the Five Fingers the dog-food gave out,¹ and a toothless old squaw² offered to trade them a few pounds of frozen horse-hide for the Colt's revolver that kept the big hunting-knife company at Hal's hip. A poor substitute for food was this hide, just as it had been stripped from the starved horses of the cattlemen six months back.³ In its frozen state it was more like strips of galvanized iron, and when a dog wrestled it into his stomach it thawed into thin and innutritious leathery strings and into a mass of short hair, irritating and indigestible.

And through it all Buck staggered along at the head of the team as in a nightmare. He pulled when he could; when he could no longer pull, he fell down and remained down till blows from whip or club drove him to his feet again. All the stiffness and gloss had gone out of his beautiful furry coat. The hair hung down, limp and dragged, or matted with dried blood where Hal's club had bruised him. His muscles had wasted away to knotty strings, and the flesh pads had disappeared, so that each rib and every bone in his frame were outlined cleanly through the loose hide that was wrinkled in folds of emptiness. It was heartbreaking, only Buck's heart was unbreakable. The man in the red sweater had proved that.

As it was with Buck, so was it with his mates. They were perambulating skeletons. There were seven all together, including him. In their very great misery they had become insensible to the bite of the lash or the bruise of the club. The pain of the beating was dull and distant, just as the things their eyes saw and their ears heard seemed dull and distant. They were not half living, or quarter living. They were simply so many bags of bones in which sparks of life fluttered faintly. When a halt was made, they dropped down in the traces like dead dogs, and the spark dimmed and paled and seemed to go out. And when the club or whip fell upon them, the spark fluttered feebly up, and they tottered to their feet and staggered on.

There came a day when Billee, the good-natured, fell and could not rise. Hal had traded off his revolver, so he took the axe and knocked Billee on the head as he lay in the traces, then cut the carcass out of the harness and dragged it to one side. Buck

1 I.e., with 228 miles/367 km still to go to Dawson.

2 Possibly from the local Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation.

3 Probably a reference to a historical event at Slaughterhouse Slough near Fort Selkirk (see Dyer 189–90).

saw, and his mates saw, and they knew that this thing was very close to them. On the next day Koonah went, and but five of them remained: Joe, too far gone to be malignant; Pike, crippled and limping, only half conscious and not conscious enough longer to malingering; Sol-leks, the one-eyed, still faithful to the toil of trace and trail, and mournful in that he had so little strength with which to pull; Teek, who had not travelled so far that winter and who was now beaten more than the others because he was fresher; and Buck, still at the head of the team, but no longer enforcing discipline or striving to enforce it, blind with weakness half the time and keeping the trail by the loom of it¹ and by the dim feel of his feet.

It was beautiful spring weather, but neither dogs nor humans were aware of it. Each day the sun rose earlier and set later. It was dawn by three in the morning, and twilight lingered till nine at night. The whole long day was a blaze of sunshine. The ghostly winter silence had given way to the great spring murmur of awakening life. This murmur arose from all the land, fraught with the joy of living. It came from the things that lived and moved again, things which had been as dead and which had not moved during the long months of frost. The sap was rising in the pines. The willows and aspens were bursting out in young buds. Shrubs and vines were putting on fresh garbs of green. Crickets sang in the nights, and in the days all manner of creeping, crawling things rustled forth into the sun. Partridges and woodpeckers were booming and knocking in the forest. Squirrels were chattering, birds singing, and overhead honked the wild-fowl driving up from the south in cunning wedges that split the air.²

From every hill slope came the trickle of running water, the music of unseen fountains. All things were thawing, bending, snapping. The Yukon was straining to break loose the ice that bound it down. It ate away from beneath; the sun ate from above. Air-holes formed, fissures sprang and spread apart, while thin sections of ice fell through bodily into the river. And amid all this bursting, rending, throbbing of awakening life, under the blazing sun and through the soft-sighing breezes, like wayfarers to death, staggered the two men, the woman, and the huskies.

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- 1 "A seaman's term for the indistinct and exaggerated appearance or outline of an object when it first comes into view, as the outline of land on the horizon, an object seen through the mist or darkness, etc." (*OED*).
 - 2 I.e., they are flying in V formation.

With the dogs falling, Mercedes weeping and riding, Hal swearing innocuously, and Charles's eyes wistfully watering, they staggered into John Thornton's camp at the mouth of White River.¹ When they halted, the dogs dropped down as though they had all been struck dead. Mercedes dried her eyes and looked at John Thornton. Charles sat down on a log to rest. He sat down very slowly and painstakingly what of his great stiffness. Hal did the talking. John Thornton was whittling the last touches on an axe-handle he had made from a stick of birch. He whittled and listened, gave monosyllabic replies, and, when it was asked, terse advice. He knew the breed,² and he gave his advice in the certainty that it would not be followed.

"They told us up above that the bottom was dropping out of the trail and that the best thing for us to do was to lay over," Hal said in response to Thornton's warning to take no more chances on the rotten ice. "They told us we couldn't make White River, and here we are." This last with a sneering ring of triumph in it.

"And they told you true," John Thornton answered. "The bottom's likely to drop out at any moment. Only fools, with the blind luck of fools, could have made it. I tell you straight, I wouldn't risk my carcass on that ice for all the gold in Alaska."

"That's because you're not a fool, I suppose," said Hal. "All the same, we'll go on to Dawson." He uncoiled his whip. "Get up there, Buck! Hi! Get up there! Mush on!"

Thornton went on whittling. It was idle, he knew, to get between a fool and his folly; while two or three fools more or less would not alter the scheme of things.

But the team did not get up at the command. It had long since passed into the stage where blows were required to rouse it. The whip flashed out, here and there, on its merciless errands. John Thornton compressed his lips. Sol-leks was the first to crawl to his feet. Teek followed. Joe came next, yelping with pain. Pike made painful efforts. Twice he fell over, when half up, and on the third attempt managed to rise. Buck made no effort. He lay quietly where he had fallen. The lash bit into him again and again, but he neither whined nor struggled. Several times Thornton started, as though to speak, but changed his mind. A moisture came into his eyes, and, as the whipping continued, he arose and walked irresolutely up and down.

1 Tributary meeting Yukon River about 152 miles/244 km downstream from the Five Fingers; there are still 76 miles/123 km to go to Dawson.

2 He knew what kind of people they were.

This was the first time Buck had failed, in itself a sufficient reason to drive Hal into a rage. He exchanged the whip for the customary club. Buck refused to move under the rain of heavier blows which now fell upon him. Like his mates, he was barely able to get up, but, unlike them, he had made up his mind not to get up. He had a vague feeling of impending doom. This had been strong upon him when he pulled in to the bank, and it had not departed from him. What of the thin and rotten ice he had felt under his feet all day, it seemed that he sensed disaster close at hand, out there ahead on the ice where his master was trying to drive him. He refused to stir. So greatly had he suffered, and so far gone was he, that the blows did not hurt much. And as they continued to fall upon him, the spark of life within flickered and went down. It was nearly out. He felt strangely numb. As though from a great distance, he was aware that he was being beaten. The last sensations of pain left him. He no longer felt anything, though very faintly he could hear the impact of the club upon his body. But it was no longer his body, it seemed so far away.

And then, suddenly, without warning, uttering a cry that was inarticulate and more like the cry of an animal, John Thornton sprang upon the man who wielded the club. Hal was hurled backward, as though struck by a falling tree. Mercedes screamed. Charles looked on wistfully, wiped his watery eyes, but did not get up because of his stiffness.

John Thornton stood over Buck, struggling to control himself, too convulsed with rage to speak.

"If you strike that dog again, I'll kill you," he at last managed to say in a choking voice.

"It's my dog," Hal replied, wiping the blood from his mouth as he came back. "Get out of my way, or I'll fix you. I'm going to Dawson."

Thornton stood between him and Buck, and evinced no intention of getting out of the way. Hal drew his long hunting-knife. Mercedes screamed, cried, laughed, and manifested the chaotic abandonment of hysteria. Thornton rapped Hal's knuckles with the axe-handle, knocking the knife to the ground. He rapped his knuckles again as he tried to pick it up. Then he stooped, picked it up himself, and with two strokes cut Buck's traces.

Hal had no fight left in him. Besides, his hands were full with his sister, or his arms, rather; while Buck was too near dead to be of further use in hauling the sled. A few minutes later they pulled out from the bank and down the river. Buck heard them go and raised his head to see. Pike was leading, Sol-leks was at the wheel,

and between were Joe and Teek. They were limping and staggering. Mercedes was riding the loaded sled. Hal guided at the gee-pole, and Charles stumbled along in the rear.

As Buck watched them, Thornton knelt beside him and with rough, kindly hands searched for broken bones. By the time his search had disclosed nothing more than many bruises and a state of terrible starvation, the sled was a quarter of a mile¹ away. Dog and man watched it crawling along over the ice. Suddenly, they saw its back end drop down, as into a rut, and the gee-pole, with Hal clinging to it, jerk into the air. Mercedes's scream came to their ears. They saw Charles turn and make one step to run back, and then a whole section of ice give way and dogs and humans disappear. A yawning hole was all that was to be seen. The bottom had dropped out of the trail.

John Thornton and Buck looked at each other.

"You poor devil," said John Thornton, and Buck licked his hand.

VI

For the Love of a Man

When John Thornton froze his feet in the previous December, his partners had made him comfortable and left him to get well, going on themselves up the river to get out a raft of saw-logs for Dawson. He was still limping slightly at the time he rescued Buck, but with the continued warm weather even the slight limp left him. And here, lying by the river bank through the long spring days, watching the running water, listening lazily to the songs of birds and the hum of nature, Buck slowly won back his strength.

A rest comes very good after one has travelled three thousand miles,² and it must be confessed that Buck waxed lazy as his wounds healed, his muscles swelled out, and the flesh came back to cover his bones. For that matter, they were all loafing,—Buck, John Thornton, and Skeet and Nig,—waiting for the raft to come that was to carry them down to Dawson. Skeet was a little Irish setter³ who early made friends with Buck, who, in a dying condition, was unable to resent her first advances. She had the doctor trait which some dogs possess; and as a mother cat washes her

1 402 m.

2 4,828 km.

3 A.k.a. red setter, a hunting dog with a playful character and a long, silky, red coat.

kittens, so she washed and cleansed Buck's wounds. Regularly, each morning after he had finished his breakfast, she performed her self-appointed task, till he came to look for her ministrations as much as he did for Thornton's. Nig, equally friendly though less demonstrative, was a huge black dog, half bloodhound and half deerhound,¹ with eyes that laughed and a boundless good nature.

To Buck's surprise these dogs manifested no jealousy toward him. They seemed to share the kindliness and largeness of John Thornton. As Buck grew stronger they enticed him into all sorts of ridiculous games, in which Thornton himself could not forbear to join; and in this fashion Buck romped through his convalescence and into a new existence. Love, genuine passionate love, was his for the first time. This he had never experienced at Judge Miller's down in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. With the Judge's sons, hunting and tramping, it had been a working partnership; with the Judge's grandsons, a sort of pompous guardianship; and with the Judge himself, a stately and dignified friendship. But love that was feverish and burning, that was adoration, that was madness, it had taken John Thornton to arouse.

This man had saved his life, which was something; but, further, he was the ideal master. Other men saw to the welfare of their dogs from a sense of duty and business expediency; he saw to the welfare of his as if they were his own children, because he could not help it. And he saw further. He never forgot a kindly greeting or a cheering word, and to sit down for a long talk with them ("gas" he called it) was as much his delight as theirs. He had a way of taking Buck's head roughly between his hands, and resting his own head upon Buck's, of shaking him back and forth, the while calling him ill names that to Buck were love names. Buck knew no greater joy than that rough embrace and the sound of murmured oaths, and at each jerk back and forth it seemed that his heart would be shaken out of his body, so great was its ecstasy. And when, released, he sprang to his feet, his mouth laughing, his eyes eloquent, his throat vibrant with unuttered sound, and in that fashion remained without movement, John Thornton would reverently exclaim, "God! you can all but speak!"

Buck had a trick of love expression that was akin to hurt. He

1 The bloodhound is a large, heavy, gentle dog bred to track people by scent; the (Scottish) deerhound, a docile dog bred to course red deer, resembles a greyhound but is much taller.

would often seize Thornton's hand in his mouth and close so fiercely that the flesh bore the impress of his teeth for some time afterward. And as Buck understood the oaths to be love words, so the man understood this feigned bite for a caress.

For the most part, however, Buck's love was expressed in adoration. While he went wild with happiness when Thornton touched him or spoke to him, he did not seek these tokens. Unlike Skeet, who was wont to shove her nose under Thornton's hand and nudge and nudge till petted, or Nig, who would stalk up and rest his great head on Thornton's knee, Buck was content to adore at a distance. He would lie by the hour, eager, alert, at Thornton's feet, looking up into his face, dwelling upon it, studying it, following with keenest interest each fleeting expression, every movement or change of feature. Or, as chance might have it, he would lie farther away, to the side or rear, watching the outlines of the man and the occasional movements of his body. And often, such was the communion in which they lived, the strength of Buck's gaze would draw John Thornton's head around, and he would return the gaze, without speech, his heart shining out of his eyes as Buck's heart shone out.

For a long time after his rescue, Buck did not like Thornton to get out of his sight. From the moment he left the tent to when he entered it again, Buck would follow at his heels. His transient masters since he had come into the Northland had bred in him a fear that no master could be permanent. He was afraid that Thornton would pass out of his life as Perrault and François and the Scotch half-breed had passed out. Even in the night, in his dreams, he was haunted by this fear. At such times he would shake off sleep and creep through the chill to the flap of the tent, where he would stand and listen to the sound of his master's breathing.

But in spite of this great love he bore John Thornton, which seemed to bespeak the soft civilizing influence, the strain of the primitive, which the Northland had aroused in him, remained alive and active. Faithfulness and devotion, things born of fire and roof, were his; yet he retained his wildness and wiliness. He was a thing of the wild, come in from the wild to sit by John Thornton's fire, rather than a dog of the soft Southland stamped with the marks of generations of civilization. Because of his very great love, he could not steal from this man, but from any other man, in any other camp, he did not hesitate an instant; while the cunning with which he stole enabled him to escape detection.

His face and body were scored by the teeth of many dogs, and he fought as fiercely as ever and more shrewdly. Skeet and Nig were too good-natured for quarrelling,—besides, they belonged to John Thornton; but the strange dog, no matter what the breed or valor, swiftly acknowledged Buck's supremacy or found himself struggling for life with a terrible antagonist. And Buck was merciless. He had learned well the law of club and fang, and he never forewent an advantage or drew back from a foe he had started on the way to Death. He had lessoned from Spitz, and from the chief fighting dogs of the police and mail, and knew there was no middle course. He must master or be mastered; while to show mercy was a weakness. Mercy did not exist in the primordial life. It was misunderstood for fear, and such misunderstandings made for death. Kill or be killed, eat or be eaten, was the law; and this mandate, down out of the depths of Time, he obeyed.

He was older than the days he had seen and the breaths he had drawn. He linked the past with the present, and the eternity behind him throbbed through him in a mighty rhythm to which he swayed as the tides and seasons swayed. He sat by John Thornton's fire, a broad-breasted dog, white-fanged and long-furred; but behind him were the shades of all manner of dogs, half-wolves and wild wolves, urgent and prompting, tasting the savor of the meat he ate, thirsting for the water he drank, scenting the wind with him, listening with him and telling him the sounds made by the wild life in the forest, dictating his moods, directing his actions, lying down to sleep with him when he lay down, and dreaming with him and beyond him and becoming themselves the stuff of his dreams.

So peremptorily did these shades beckon him, that each day mankind and the claims of mankind slipped farther from him. Deep in the forest a call was sounding, and as often as he heard this call, mysteriously thrilling and luring, he felt compelled to turn his back upon the fire and the beaten earth around it, and to plunge into the forest, and on and on, he knew not where or why; nor did he wonder where or why, the call sounding imperiously, deep in the forest. But as often as he gained the soft unbroken earth and the green shade, the love for John Thornton drew him back to the fire again.

Thornton alone held him. The rest of mankind was as nothing. Chance travellers might praise or pet him; but he was cold under it all, and from a too demonstrative man he would get up and walk away. When Thornton's partners, Hans and Pete, arrived on

the long-expected raft, Buck refused to notice them till he learned they were close to Thornton; after that he tolerated them in a passive sort of way, accepting favors from them as though he favored them by accepting. They were of the same large type as Thornton, living close to the earth, thinking simply and seeing clearly; and ere they swung the raft into the big eddy by the saw-mill at Dawson, they understood Buck and his ways, and did not insist upon an intimacy such as obtained with Skeet and Nig.

For Thornton, however, his love seemed to grow and grow. He, alone among men, could put a pack upon Buck's back in the summer travelling. Nothing was too great for Buck to do, when Thornton commanded. One day (they had grub-staked themselves from the proceeds of the raft¹ and left Dawson for the head-waters of the Tanana)² the men and dogs were sitting on the crest of a cliff which fell away, straight down, to naked bed-rock three hundred feet below. John Thornton was sitting near the edge, Buck at his shoulder. A thoughtless whim seized Thornton, and he drew the attention of Hans and Pete to the experiment he had in mind. "Jump, Buck!" he commanded, sweeping his arm out and over the chasm. The next instant he was grappling with Buck on the extreme edge, while Hans and Pete were dragging them back into safety.

"It's uncanny," Pete said, after it was over and they had caught their speech.

Thornton shook his head. "No, it is splendid, and it is terrible, too. Do you know, it sometimes makes me afraid."

"I'm not hankering to be the man that lays hands on you while he's around," Pete announced conclusively, nodding his head toward Buck.

"Py Jingo!" was Hans's contribution. "Not mineself either."

It was at Circle City,³ ere the year was out, that Pete's apprehensions were realized. "Black" Burton, a man evil-tempered and

1 In US mining slang, a grubstake is "the outfit, provisions, etc. furnished to a prospector on condition of participating in the profits of any find he may make" (*OED*). More generally, it is money advanced to someone starting a business in return for a share in future profits. Here Thornton raises cash himself by selling the lumber from his raft to the sawmill at Dawson.

2 A tributary of the Yukon River in central Alaska where gold was found in 1902.

3 (Now Circle), a settlement on the Yukon River in east central Alaska, established in 1893 as a base for unloading supplies shipped upstream from the Bering Sea.

malicious, had been picking a quarrel with a tenderfoot¹ at the bar, when Thornton stepped good-naturedly between. Buck, as was his custom, was lying in a corner, head on paws, watching his master's every action. Burton struck out, without warning, straight from the shoulder. Thornton was sent spinning, and saved himself from falling only by clutching the rail of the bar.

Those who were looking on heard what was neither bark nor yelp, but a something which is best described as a roar, and they saw Buck's body rise up in the air as he left the floor for Burton's throat. The man saved his life by instinctively throwing out his arm, but was hurled backward to the floor with Buck on top of him. Buck loosed his teeth from the flesh of the arm and drove in again for the throat. This time the man succeeded only in partly blocking, and his throat was torn open. Then the crowd was upon Buck, and he was driven off; but while a surgeon checked the bleeding, he prowled up and down, growling furiously, attempting to rush in, and being forced back by an array of hostile clubs. A "miners' meeting,"² called on the spot, decided that the dog had sufficient provocation, and Buck was discharged. But his reputation was made, and from that day his name spread through every camp in Alaska.

Later on, in the fall of the year, he saved John Thornton's life in quite another fashion. The three partners were lining a long and narrow poling-boat down a bad stretch of rapids on the Forty-Mile Creek.³ Hans and Pete moved along the bank, snubbing⁴ with a thin Manila rope⁵ from tree to tree, while Thornton remained in the boat, helping its descent by means of a pole, and shouting directions to the shore. Buck, on the bank, worried and anxious, kept abreast of the boat, his eyes never off his master.

At a particularly bad spot, where a ledge of barely submerged rocks jutted out into the river, Hans cast off the rope, and, while Thornton poled the boat out into the stream, ran down the bank

1 A raw, inexperienced person.

2 An informal judicial procedure associated with US frontier mining camps, whereby disputes were solved by majority vote after all parties had had their say.

3 (Now Fortymile River), a tributary meeting the Yukon River about 48 miles/77 km downstream from Dawson.

4 "To snub" is to abruptly check a boat's movement with a rope; here the men control the boat's rapid downstream movement by roping it to successive trees on shore.

5 Durable marine rope made from banana-leaf fibre.

with the end in his hand to snub the boat when it had cleared the ledge. This it did, and was flying down-stream in a current as swift as a mill-race,¹ when Hans checked it with the rope and checked too suddenly. The boat flirted over and snubbed in to the bank bottom up, while Thornton, flung sheer out of it, was carried down-stream toward the worst part of the rapids, a stretch of wild water in which no swimmer could live.

Buck had sprung in on the instant; and at the end of three hundred yards,² amid a mad swirl of water, he overhauled Thornton. When he felt him grasp his tail, Buck headed for the bank, swimming with all his splendid strength. But the progress shoreward was slow; the progress down-stream amazingly rapid. From below came the fatal roaring where the wild current went wilder and was rent in shreds and spray by the rocks which thrust through like the teeth of an enormous comb. The suck of the water as it took the beginning of the last steep pitch was frightful, and Thornton knew that the shore was impossible. He scraped furiously over a rock, bruised across a second, and struck a third with crushing force. He clutched its slippery top with both hands, releasing Buck, and above the roar of the churning water shouted: "Go, Buck! Go!"

Buck could not hold his own, and swept on down-stream, struggling desperately, but unable to win back. When he heard Thornton's command repeated, he partly reared out of the water, throwing his head high, as though for a last look, then turned obediently toward the bank. He swam powerfully and was dragged ashore by Pete and Hans at the very point where swimming ceased to be possible and destruction began.

They knew that the time a man could cling to a slippery rock in the face of that driving current was a matter of minutes, and they ran as fast as they could up the bank to a point far above where Thornton was hanging on. They attached the line with which they had been snubbing the boat to Buck's neck and shoulders, being careful that it should neither strangle him nor impede his swimming, and launched him into the stream. He struck out boldly, but not straight enough into the stream. He discovered the mistake too late, when Thornton was abreast of him and a bare half-dozen strokes away while he was being carried helplessly past.

1 An artificial channel causing water to flow quickly so as to drive a water-mill.

2 274 m.

Hans promptly snubbed with the rope, as though Buck were a boat. The rope thus tightening on him in the sweep of the current, he was jerked under the surface, and under the surface he remained till his body struck against the bank and he was hauled out. He was half drowned, and Hans and Pete threw themselves upon him, pounding the breath into him and the water out of him. He staggered to his feet and fell down. The faint sound of Thornton's voice came to them, and though they could not make out the words of it, they knew that he was in his extremity. His master's voice acted on Buck like an electric shock. He sprang to his feet and ran up the bank ahead of the men to the point of his previous departure.

Again the rope was attached and he was launched, and again he struck out, but this time straight into the stream. He had miscalculated once, but he would not be guilty of it a second time. Hans paid out the rope, permitting no slack, while Pete kept it clear of coils. Buck held on till he was on a line straight above Thornton; then he turned, and with the speed of an express train headed down upon him. Thornton saw him coming, and, as Buck struck him like a battering ram, with the whole force of the current behind him, he reached up and closed with both arms around the shaggy neck. Hans snubbed the rope around the tree, and Buck and Thornton were jerked under the water. Strangling, suffocating, sometimes one uppermost and sometimes the other, dragging over the jagged bottom, smashing against rocks and snags,¹ they veered in to the bank.

Thornton came to, belly downward and being violently propelled back and forth across a drift log by Hans and Pete. His first glance was for Buck, over whose limp and apparently lifeless body Nig was setting up a howl, while Skeet was licking the wet face and closed eyes. Thornton was himself bruised and battered, and he went carefully over Buck's body, when he had been brought around, finding three broken ribs.

"That settles it," he announced. "We camp right here." And camp they did, till Buck's ribs knitted and he was able to travel.

That winter, at Dawson, Buck performed another exploit, not so heroic, perhaps, but one that put his name many notches higher on the totem-pole of Alaskan fame. This exploit was particularly gratifying to the three men; for they stood in need of the outfit which it furnished, and were enabled to make a long-

1 A snag is part of a tree that, caught in a river bed, forms a danger to navigation.

desired trip into the virgin East,¹ where miners had not yet appeared. It was brought about by a conversation in the Eldorado Saloon,² in which men waxed boastful of their favorite dogs. Buck, because of his record, was the target for these men, and Thornton was driven stoutly to defend him. At the end of half an hour one man stated that his dog could start a sled with five hundred pounds and walk off with it; a second bragged six hundred for his dog; and a third, seven hundred.³

"Pooh! pooh!" said John Thornton; "Buck can start a thousand pounds."⁴

"And break it out? and walk off with it for a hundred yards?" demanded Matthewson, a Bonanza King,⁵ he of the seven hundred vaunt.

"And break it out, and walk off with it for a hundred yards," John Thornton said coolly.

"Well," Matthewson said, slowly and deliberately, so that all could hear, "I've got a thousand dollars that says he can't. And there it is." So saying, he slammed a sack of gold dust of the size of a bologna sausage down upon the bar.

Nobody spoke. Thornton's bluff, if bluff it was, had been called. He could feel a flush of warm blood creeping up his face. His tongue had tricked him. He did not know whether Buck could start a thousand pounds. Half a ton! The enormousness of it appalled him. He had great faith in Buck's strength and had often thought him capable of starting such a load; but never, as now, had he faced the possibility of it, the eyes of a dozen men fixed upon him, silent and waiting. Further, he had no thousand dollars; nor had Hans or Pete.

"I've got a sled standing outside now, with twenty fifty-pound sacks of flour on it," Matthewson went on with brutal directness; "so don't let that hinder you."

Thornton did not reply. He did not know what to say. He

1 The unprospected territory east of Dawson.

2 There was no Eldorado Saloon in Dawson during the gold rush, though Adney mentions an Eldorado Restaurant (331). However, there was an Eldorado Saloon in Klondike City (a.k.a. Lousetown), a settlement notorious for its brothels and gambling joints just across the Klondike River from Dawson.

3 500 lb = 227 kg; 600 lb = 273 kg; 700 lb = 318 kg.

4 455 kg. For the factual basis of this feat, see Appendix D3 and the story of the mastiff Julian in Murphy and Haigh 29–33.

5 Someone who had struck it rich from gold discoveries in Bonanza Creek (see *CW* 55, note 1).

glanced from face to face in the absent way of a man who has lost the power of thought and is seeking somewhere to find the thing that will start it going again. The face of Jim O'Brien, a Mastodon King¹ and old-time comrade, caught his eyes. It was as a cue to him, seeming to rouse him to do what he would never have dreamed of doing.

"Can you lend me a thousand?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"Sure," answered O'Brien, thumping down a plethoric² sack by the side of Matthewson's. "Though it's little faith I'm having, John, that the beast can do the trick."

The Eldorado emptied its occupants into the street to see the test. The tables were deserted, and the dealers and gamekeepers came forth to see the outcome of the wager and to lay odds. Several hundred men, furred and mittened, banked around the sled within easy distance. Matthewson's sled, loaded with a thousand pounds of flour, had been standing for a couple of hours, and in the intense cold (it was sixty below zero)³ the runners had frozen fast to the hard-packed snow. Men offered odds of two to one that Buck could not budge the sled. A quibble arose concerning the phrase "break out." O'Brien contended it was Thornton's privilege to knock the runners loose, leaving Buck to "break it out" from a dead standstill. Matthewson insisted that the phrase included breaking the runners from the frozen grip of the snow. A majority of the men who had witnessed the making of the bet decided in his favor, whereat the odds went up to three to one against Buck.

There were no takers. Not a man believed him capable of the feat. Thornton had been hurried into the wager, heavy with doubt; and now that he looked at the sled itself, the concrete fact, with the regular team of ten dogs curled up in the snow before it, the more impossible the task appeared. Matthewson waxed jubilant.

"Three to one!" he proclaimed. "I'll lay you another thousand at that figure, Thornton. What d'ye say?"

Thornton's doubt was strong in his face, but his fighting spirit was aroused—the fighting spirit that soars above odds, fails to recognize the impossible, and is deaf to all save the clamor for battle. He called Hans and Pete to him. Their sacks were slim,

1 Someone who had struck it rich at Mastodon Creek, near Circle City, Alaska, where gold was discovered in 1893.

2 Excessively full.

3 -51°C.

and with his own the three partners could rake together only two hundred dollars. In the ebb of their fortunes, this sum was their total capital; yet they laid it unhesitatingly against Matthewson's six hundred.

The team of ten dogs was unhitched, and Buck, with his own harness, was put into the sled. He had caught the contagion of the excitement, and he felt that in some way he must do a great thing for John Thornton. Murmurs of admiration at his splendid appearance went up. He was in perfect condition, without an ounce of superfluous flesh, and the one hundred and fifty pounds¹ that he weighed were so many pounds of grit and virility. His furry coat shone with the sheen of silk. Down the neck and across the shoulders, his mane, in repose as it was, half bristled and seemed to lift with every movement, as though excess of vigor made each particular hair alive and active. The great breast and heavy fore legs were no more than in proportion with the rest of the body, where the muscles showed in tight rolls underneath the skin. Men felt these muscles and proclaimed them hard as iron, and the odds went down to two to one.

"Gad, sir! Gad, sir!" stuttered a member of the latest dynasty, a king of the Skookum Benches.² "I offer you eight hundred for him, sir, before the test, sir; eight hundred just as he stands."

Thornton shook his head and stepped to Buck's side.

"You must stand off from him," Matthewson protested. "Free play and plenty of room."

The crowd fell silent; only could be heard the voices of the gamblers vainly offering two to one. Everybody acknowledged Buck a magnificent animal, but twenty fifty-pound sacks of flour bulked too large in their eyes for them to loosen their pouch-strings.

Thornton knelt down by Buck's side. He took his head in his two hands and rested cheek on cheek. He did not playfully shake him, as was his wont, or murmur soft love curses; but he whispered in his ear. "As you love me, Buck. As you love me," was what he whispered. Buck whined with suppressed eagerness.

The crowd was watching curiously. The affair was growing mysterious. It seemed like a conjuration. As Thornton got to his

1 68 kg.

2 The Skookum Benches were near the junction of Skookum Gulch and Bonanza Creek in the Klondike; a bench claim was a hillside rather than a creekside claim.

feet, Buck seized his mittened hand between his jaws, pressing in with his teeth and releasing slowly, half-reluctantly. It was the answer, in terms, not of speech, but of love. Thornton stepped well back.

"Now, Buck," he said.

Buck tightened the traces, then slacked them for a matter of several inches. It was the way he had learned.

"Gee!" Thornton's voice rang out, sharp in the tense silence.

Buck swung to the right, ending the movement in a plunge that took up the slack and with a sudden jerk arrested his one hundred and fifty pounds. The load quivered, and from under the runners arose a crisp crackling.

"Haw!" Thornton commanded.

Buck duplicated the manœuvre, this time to the left. The crackling turned into a snapping, the sled pivoting and the runners slipping and grating several inches to the side. The sled was broken out. Men were holding their breaths, intensely unconscious of the fact.

"Now, MUSH!"

Thornton's command cracked out like a pistol-shot. Buck threw himself forward, tightening the traces with a jarring lunge. His whole body was gathered compactly together in the tremendous effort, the muscles writhing and knotting like live things under the silky fur. His great chest was low to the ground, his head forward and down, while his feet were flying like mad, the claws scarring the hard-packed snow in parallel grooves. The sled swayed and trembled, half-started forward. One of his feet slipped, and one man groaned aloud. Then the sled lurched ahead in what appeared a rapid succession of jerks, though it never really came to a dead stop again ... half an inch ... an inch ... two inches.¹ ... The jerks perceptibly diminished; as the sled gained momentum, he caught them up, till it was moving steadily along.

Men gasped and began to breathe again, unaware that for a moment they had ceased to breathe. Thornton was running behind, encouraging Buck with short, cheery words. The distance had been measured off, and as he neared the pile of firewood which marked the end of the hundred yards, a cheer began to grow and grow, which burst into a roar as he passed the firewood and halted at command. Every man was tearing himself loose,

1 0.5 inch = 1.25 cm; 1 inch = 2.5 cm; 2 inches = 5 cm.

even Matthewson. Hats and mittens were flying in the air. Men were shaking hands, it did not matter with whom, and bubbling over in a general incoherent babel.

But Thornton fell on his knees beside Buck. Head was against head, and he was shaking him back and forth. Those who hurried up heard him cursing Buck, and he cursed him long and fervently, and softly and lovingly.

"Gad, sir! Gad, sir!" spluttered the Skookum Bench king. "I'll give you a thousand for him, sir, a thousand, sir—twelve hundred, sir."

Thornton rose to his feet. His eyes were wet. The tears were streaming frankly down his cheeks. "Sir," he said to the Skookum Bench king, "no, sir. You can go to hell, sir. It's the best I can do for you, sir."

Buck seized Thornton's hand in his teeth. Thornton shook him back and forth. As though animated by a common impulse, the onlookers drew back to a respectful distance; nor were they again indiscreet enough to interrupt.

VII

The Sounding of the Call

When Buck earned sixteen hundred dollars in five minutes for John Thornton, he made it possible for his master to pay off certain debts and to journey with his partners into the East after a fabled lost mine, the history of which was as old as the history of the country. Many men had sought it; few had found it; and more than a few there were who had never returned from the quest. This lost mine was steeped in tragedy and shrouded in mystery. No one knew of the first man. The oldest tradition stopped before it got back to him. From the beginning there had been an ancient and ramshackle cabin. Dying men had sworn to it, and to the mine the site of which it marked, clinching their testimony with nuggets that were unlike any known grade of gold in the Northland.

But no living man had looted this treasure house, and the dead were dead; wherefore John Thornton and Pete and Hans, with Buck and half a dozen other dogs, faced into the East on an unknown trail to achieve where men and dogs as good as themselves had failed. They sledged seventy miles up the Yukon, swung to the left into the Stewart River, passed the Mayo and the McQuestion, and held on until the Stewart itself became a

streamlet, threading the upstanding peaks which marked the backbone of the continent.¹

John Thornton asked little of man or nature. He was unafraid of the wild. With a handful of salt² and a rifle he could plunge into the wilderness and fare wherever he pleased and as long as he pleased. Being in no haste, Indian fashion, he hunted his dinner in the course of the day's travel; and if he failed to find it, like the Indian, he kept on travelling, secure in the knowledge that sooner or later he would come to it. So, on this great journey into the East, straight meat was the bill of fare, ammunition and tools principally made up the load on the sled, and the time-card was drawn upon the limitless future.³

To Buck it was boundless delight, this hunting, fishing, and indefinite wandering through strange places. For weeks at a time they would hold on steadily, day after day; and for weeks upon end they would camp, here and there, the dogs loafing and the men burning holes through frozen muck and gravel and washing countless pans of dirt by the heat of the fire. Sometimes they went hungry, sometimes they feasted riotously, all according to the abundance of game and the fortune of hunting. Summer arrived, and dogs and men packed on their backs, rafted across blue mountain lakes, and descended or ascended unknown rivers in slender boats whipsawed⁴ from the standing forest.

The months came and went, and back and forth they twisted through the uncharted vastness, where no men were and yet where men had been if the Lost Cabin were true. They went across divides in summer blizzards, shivered under the midnight sun on naked mountains between the timber line and the eternal snows, dropped into summer valleys amid swarming gnats and

1 The Stewart River, a tributary of the Yukon River, arises in the Selwyn Mountains in the Eastern YT; this range is part of the North American Continental Divide, which now forms the boundary between the YT and the NWT. The Stewart meets the Yukon about 66 miles/106 km upstream from Dawson. The Mayo and McQuestion (now McQuesten) Rivers are tributaries of the Stewart.

2 For preserving and seasoning game.

3 A time-card is an industrial employer's record of an employee's time worked, here used figuratively to suggest that the workaday routine is left behind as Thornton's party enters a timeless world of unspoiled nature.

4 A whipsaw is "a frame-saw with a narrow blade, used esp[ecially] for curved work" (*OED*).

flies, and in the shadows of glaciers picked strawberries and flowers as ripe and fair as any the Southland could boast. In the fall of the year they penetrated a weird lake country, sad and silent, where wild-fowl had been, but where then there was no life nor sign of life—only the blowing of chill winds, the forming of ice in sheltered places, and the melancholy rippling of waves on lonely beaches.

And through another winter they wandered on the obliterated trails of men who had gone before. Once, they came upon a path blazed throughout the forest, an ancient path, and the Lost Cabin seemed very near. But the path began nowhere and ended nowhere, and it remained mystery, as the man who made it and the reason he made it remained mystery. Another time they chanced upon the time-graven wreckage of a hunting lodge, and amid the shreds of rotted blankets John Thornton found a long-barrelled flint-lock.¹ He knew it for a Hudson Bay Company² gun of the young days in the Northwest, when such a gun was worth its height in beaver skins packed flat.³ And that was all—no hint as to the man who in an early day had reared the lodge and left the gun among the blankets.

Spring came on once more, and at the end of all their wandering they found, not the Lost Cabin, but a shallow placer⁴ in a broad valley where the gold showed like yellow butter across the bottom of the washing-pan. They sought no farther. Each day they worked earned them thousands of dollars in clean dust and nuggets, and they worked every day. The gold was sacked in moose-hide bags, fifty pounds to the bag, and piled like so much firewood outside the spruce-bough lodge. Like giants they toiled, days flashing on the heels of days like dreams as they heaped the treasure up.

There was nothing for the dogs to do, save the hauling in of meat now and again that Thornton killed, and Buck spent long hours musing by the fire. The vision of the short-legged hairy

1 Kind of musket common before 1840.

2 The Hudson's Bay Company (incorporated 1670) is a still-existing commercial enterprise that once controlled the fur trade in the NWT and shaped the history of Canada.

3 But see Dyer 219.

4 (Pronounced with a short "a"), "A deposit of sand, gravel, or earth, esp[ecially] in the bed of a stream, containing particles of gold or other valuable minerals; a place where this detritus is washed for gold, etc." (*OED*).

man came to him more frequently, now that there was little work to be done; and often, blinking by the fire, Buck wandered with him in that other world which he remembered.

The salient thing of this other world seemed fear. When he watched the hairy man sleeping by the fire, head between his knees and hands clasped above, Buck saw that he slept restlessly, with many starts and awakenings, at which times he would peer fearfully into the darkness and fling more wood upon the fire. Did they walk by the beach of a sea, where the hairy man gathered shell-fish and ate them as he gathered, it was with eyes that roved everywhere for hidden danger and with legs prepared to run like the wind at its first appearance. Through the forest they crept noiselessly, Buck at the hairy man's heels; and they were alert and vigilant, the pair of them, ears twitching and moving and nostrils quivering, for the man heard and smelled as keenly as Buck. The hairy man could spring up into the trees and travel ahead as fast as on the ground, swinging by the arms from limb to limb, sometimes a dozen feet apart, letting go and catching, never falling, never missing his grip. In fact, he seemed as much at home among the trees as on the ground; and Buck had memories of nights of vigil spent beneath trees wherein the hairy man roosted, holding on tightly as he slept.¹

And closely akin to the visions of the hairy man was the call still sounding in the depths of the forest. It filled him with a great unrest and strange desires. It caused him to feel a vague, sweet gladness, and he was aware of wild yearnings and stirrings for he knew not what. Sometimes he pursued the call into the forest, looking for it as though it were a tangible thing, barking softly or defiantly, as the mood might dictate. He would thrust his nose into the cool wood moss, or into the black soil where long grasses grew, and snort with joy at the fat earth smells; or he would crouch for hours, as if in concealment, behind fungus-covered trunks of fallen trees, wide-eyed and wide-eared to all that moved and sounded about him. It might be, lying thus, that he hoped to surprise this call he could not understand. But he did not know why he did these various things. He was impelled to do them, and did not reason about them at all.

Irresistible impulses seized him. He would be lying in camp, dozing lazily in the heat of the day, when suddenly his head would lift and his ears cock up, intent and listening, and he would

1 A semi-arboreal ape-man is the alter ego of the atavistic protagonist of London's novel *Before Adam* (1907).

spring to his feet and dash away, and on and on, for hours, through the forest aisles and across the open spaces where the niggerheads¹ bunched. He loved to run down dry watercourses, and to creep and spy upon the bird life in the woods. For a day at a time he would lie in the underbrush where he could watch the partridges drumming and strutting up and down. But especially he loved to run in the dim twilight of the summer midnights, listening to the subdued and sleepy murmurs of the forest, reading signs and sounds as man may read a book, and seeking for the mysterious something that called—called, waking or sleeping, at all times, for him to come.

One night he sprang from sleep with a start, eager-eyed, nostrils quivering and scenting, his mane bristling in recurrent waves. From the forest came the call (or one note of it, for the call was many noted), distinct and definite as never before,—a long-drawn howl, like, yet unlike, any noise made by husky dog. And he knew it, in the old familiar way, as a sound heard before. He sprang through the sleeping camp and in swift silence dashed through the woods. As he drew closer to the cry he went more slowly, with caution in every movement, till he came to an open place among the trees, and looking out saw, erect on haunches, with nose pointed to the sky, a long, lean, timber wolf.²

He had made no noise, yet it ceased from its howling and tried to sense his presence. Buck stalked into the open, half crouching, body gathered compactly together, tail straight and stiff, feet falling with unwonted care. Every movement advertised commingled threatening and overture of friendliness. It was the menacing truce that marks the meeting of wild beasts that prey. But the wolf fled at sight of him. He followed, with wild leapings, in a frenzy to overtake. He ran him into a blind channel, in the bed of the creek, where a timber jam barred the way. The wolf whirled about, pivoting on his hind legs after the fashion of Joe and of all cornered husky dogs, snarling and bristling, clipping his teeth together in a continuous and rapid succession of snaps.

Buck did not attack, but circled him about and hedged him in with friendly advances. The wolf was suspicious and afraid; for Buck made three of him in weight, while his head barely reached Buck's shoulder. Watching his chance, he darted away, and the chase was resumed. Time and again he was cornered, and the

1 A kind of sedge common in subarctic meadows, a.k.a. tussock-forming cottongrass.

2 A.k.a. grey wolf (*Canis lupus*).

thing repeated, though he was in poor condition, or Buck could not so easily have overtaken him. He would run till Buck's head was even with his flank, when he would whirl around at bay, only to dash away again at the first opportunity.

But in the end Buck's pertinacity was rewarded; for the wolf, finding that no harm was intended, finally sniffed noses with him. Then they became friendly, and played about in the nervous, half-coy way with which fierce beasts belie their fierceness. After some time of this the wolf started off at an easy lope in a manner that plainly showed he was going somewhere. He made it clear to Buck that he was to come, and they ran side by side through the sombre twilight, straight up the creek bed, into the gorge from which it issued, and across the bleak divide where it took its rise.

On the opposite slope of the watershed they came down into a level country where were great stretches of forest and many streams, and through these great stretches they ran steadily, hour after hour, the sun rising higher and the day growing warmer. Buck was wildly glad. He knew he was at last answering the call, running by the side of his wood brother toward the place from where the call surely came. Old memories were coming upon him fast, and he was stirring to them as of old he stirred to the realities of which they were the shadows. He had done this thing before, somewhere in that other and dimly remembered world, and he was doing it again, now, running free in the open, the unpacked earth underfoot, the wide sky overhead.

They stopped by a running stream to drink, and, stopping, Buck remembered John Thornton. He sat down. The wolf started on toward the place from where the call surely came, then returned to him, sniffing noses and making actions as though to encourage him. But Buck turned about and started slowly on the back track. For the better part of an hour the wild brother ran by his side, whining softly. Then he sat down, pointed his nose upward, and howled. It was a mournful howl, and as Buck held steadily on his way he heard it grow faint and fainter until it was lost in the distance.

John Thornton was eating dinner when Buck dashed into camp and sprang upon him in a frenzy of affection, overturning him, scrambling upon him, licking his face, biting his hand—"playing the general tom-fool," as John Thornton characterized it, the while he shook Buck back and forth and cursed him lovingly.

For two days and nights Buck never left camp, never let Thornton out of his sight. He followed him about at his work,

watched him while he ate, saw him into his blankets at night and out of them in the morning. But after two days the call in the forest began to sound more imperiously than ever. Buck's restlessness came back on him, and he was haunted by recollections of the wild brother, and of the smiling land beyond the divide and the run side by side through the wide forest stretches. Once again he took to wandering in the woods, but the wild brother came no more; and though he listened through long vigils, the mournful howl was never raised.

He began to sleep out at night, staying away from camp for days at a time; and once he crossed the divide at the head of the creek and went down into the land of timber and streams. There he wandered for a week, seeking vainly for fresh sign of the wild brother, killing his meat as he travelled and travelling with the long, easy lope that seems never to tire. He fished for salmon in a broad stream that emptied somewhere into the sea, and by this stream he killed a large black bear, blinded by the mosquitoes while likewise fishing, and raging through the forest helpless and terrible. Even so, it was a hard fight, and it aroused the last latent remnants of Buck's ferocity. And two days later, when he returned to his kill and found a dozen wolverenes¹ quarrelling over the spoil, he scattered them like chaff; and those that fled left two behind who would quarrel no more.

The blood-longing became stronger than ever before. He was a killer, a thing that preyed, living on the things that lived, unaided, alone, by virtue of his own strength and prowess, surviving triumphantly in a hostile environment where only the strong survived. Because of all this he became possessed of a great pride in himself, which communicated itself like a contagion to his physical being. It advertised itself in all his movements, was apparent in the play of every muscle, spoke plainly as speech in the way he carried himself, and made his glorious furry coat if anything more glorious. But for the stray brown on his muzzle and above his eyes, and for the splash of white hair that ran midmost down his chest, he might well have been mistaken for a gigantic wolf, larger than the largest of the breed. From his St. Bernard father he had inherited size and weight, but it was his shepherd mother who had given shape to that size and weight. His muzzle was the long wolf muzzle, save that it was larger than

1 (Usually "wolverines"), the largest members of the weasel family, notoriously strong and fierce.

the muzzle of any wolf; and his head, somewhat broader, was the wolf head on a massive scale.

His cunning was wolf cunning, and wild cunning; his intelligence, shepherd intelligence and St. Bernard intelligence; and all this, plus an experience gained in the fiercest of schools, made him as formidable a creature as any that roamed the wild. A carnivorous animal, living on a straight meat diet, he was in full flower, at the high tide of his life, overspilling with vigor and virility. When Thornton passed a caressing hand along his back, a snapping and crackling followed the hand, each hair discharging its pent magnetism at the contact. Every part, brain and body, nerve tissue and fibre, was keyed to the most exquisite pitch; and between all the parts there was a perfect equilibrium or adjustment. To sights and sounds and events which required action, he responded with lightning-like rapidity. Quickly as a husky dog could leap to defend from attack or to attack, he could leap twice as quickly. He saw the movement, or heard sound, and responded in less time than another dog required to compass the mere seeing or hearing. He perceived and determined and responded in the same instant. In point of fact the three actions of perceiving, determining, and responding were sequential; but so infinitesimal were the intervals of time between them that they appeared simultaneous. His muscles were surcharged with vitality, and snapped into play sharply, like steel springs. Life streamed through him in splendid flood, glad and rampant, until it seemed that it would burst him asunder in sheer ecstasy and pour forth generously over the world.

"Never was there such a dog," said John Thornton one day, as the partners watched Buck marching out of camp.

"When he was made, the mould was broke," said Pete.

"Py Jingo! I t'ink so mineself," Hans affirmed.

They saw him marching out of camp, but they did not see the instant and terrible transformation which took place as soon as he was within the secrecy of the forest. He no longer marched. At once he became a thing of the wild, stealing along softly, cat-footed, a passing shadow that appeared and disappeared among the shadows. He knew how to take advantage of every cover, to crawl on his belly like a snake, and like a snake to leap and strike. He could take a ptarmigan¹ from its nest, kill a rabbit as it slept, and snap in mid air the little chipmunks fleeing a second too late for the trees. Fish, in open pools, were not too quick for him; nor

1 A game bird of the grouse family common in subarctic North America.

were beaver, mending their dams, too wary. He killed to eat, not from wantonness; but he preferred to eat what he killed himself. So a lurking humor ran through his deeds, and it was his delight to steal upon the squirrels, and, when he all but had them, to let them go, chattering in mortal fear to the tree-tops.

As the fall of the year came on, the moose appeared in greater abundance, moving slowly down to meet the winter in the lower and less rigorous valleys. Buck had already dragged down a stray part-grown calf; but he wished strongly for larger and more formidable quarry, and he came upon it one day on the divide at the head of the creek. A band of twenty moose had crossed over from the land of streams and timber, and chief among them was a great bull. He was in a savage temper, and, standing over six feet¹ from the ground, was as formidable an antagonist as even Buck could desire. Back and forth the bull tossed his great palmated² antlers, branching to fourteen points and embracing seven feet³ with the tips. His small eyes burned with a vicious and bitter light, while he roared with fury at sight of Buck.

From the bull's side, just forward of the flank, protruded a feathered arrow-end, which accounted for his savageness. Guided by that instinct which came from the old hunting days of the primordial world, Buck proceeded to cut the bull out from the herd. It was no slight task. He would bark and dance about in front of the bull, just out of reach of the great antlers and of the terrible splay hoofs which could have stamped his life out with a single blow. Unable to turn his back on the fanged danger and go on, the bull would be driven into paroxysms of rage. At such moments he charged Buck, who retreated craftily, luring him on by a simulated inability to escape. But when he was thus separated from his fellows, two or three of the younger bulls would charge back upon Buck and enable the wounded bull to rejoin the herd.

There is a patience of the wild—dogged, tireless, persistent as life itself—that holds motionless for endless hours the spider in its web, the snake in its coils, the panther in its ambush; this patience belongs peculiarly to life when it hunts its living food; and it belonged to Buck as he clung to the flank of the herd, retarding its march, irritating the young bulls, worrying the cows

1 183 cm.

2 "Of an antler: in which the angles between the tines are partly filled in to form a broad flat surface, as in fallow deer and moose" (*OED*).

3 213 cm.

with their half-grown calves, and driving the wounded bull mad with helpless rage. For half a day this continued. Buck multiplied himself, attacking from all sides, enveloping the herd in a whirlwind of menace, cutting out his victim as fast as it could rejoin its mates, wearing out the patience of creatures preyed upon, which is a lesser patience than that of creatures preying.

As the day wore along and the sun dropped to its bed in the northwest (the darkness had come back and the fall nights were six hours long), the young bulls retraced their steps more and more reluctantly to the aid of their beset leader. The down-coming winter was harrying them on to the lower levels, and it seemed they could never shake off this tireless creature that held them back. Besides, it was not the life of the herd, or of the young bulls, that was threatened. The life of only one member was demanded, which was a remoter interest than their lives, and in the end they were content to pay the toll.

As twilight fell the old bull stood with lowered head, watching his mates—the cows he had known, the calves he had fathered, the bulls he had mastered—as they shambled on at a rapid pace through the fading light. He could not follow, for before his nose leaped the merciless fanged terror that would not let him go. Three hundredweight more than half a ton he weighed;¹ he had lived a long, strong life, full of fight and struggle, and at the end he faced death at the teeth of a creature whose head did not reach beyond his great knuckled knees.

From then on, night and day, Buck never left his prey, never gave it a moment's rest, never permitted it to browse the leaves of trees or the shoots of young birch and willow. Nor did he give the wounded bull opportunity to slake his burning thirst in the slender trickling streams they crossed. Often, in desperation, he burst into long stretches of flight. At such times Buck did not attempt to stay him, but loped easily at his heels, satisfied with the way the game was played, lying down when the moose stood still, attacking him fiercely when he strove to eat or drink.

The great head drooped more and more under its tree of horns, and the shambling trot grew weak and weaker. He took to standing for long periods, with nose to the ground and dejected ears dropped limply; and Buck found more time in which to get water for himself and in which to rest. At such moments, panting with red lolling tongue and with eyes fixed upon the big bull, it appeared to Buck that a change was coming over the face of

1 1,300 lb or 590 kg.

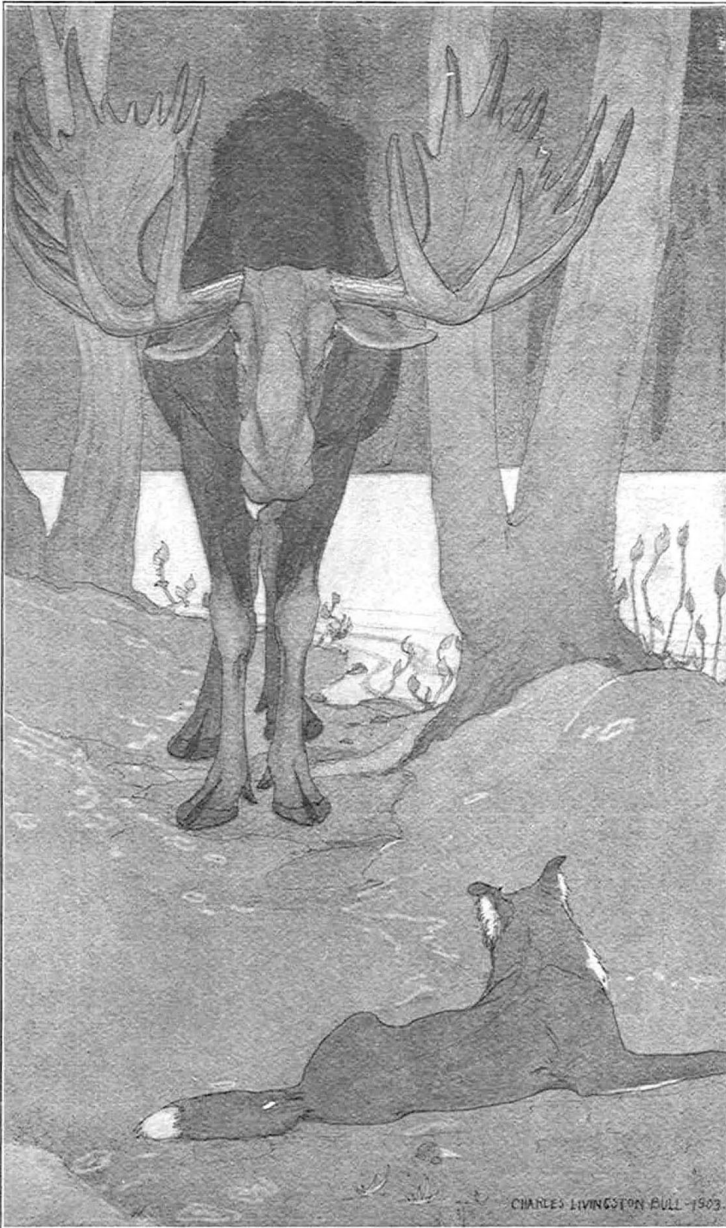


Figure 4: Buck and the Bull Moose, by Charles Livingston Bull

things. He could feel a new stir in the land. As the moose were coming into the land, other kinds of life were coming in. Forest and stream and air seemed palpitant¹ with their presence. The news of it was borne in upon him, not by sight, or sound, or smell, but by some other and subtler sense.² He heard nothing, saw nothing, yet knew that the land was somehow different; that through it strange things were afoot and ranging; and he resolved to investigate after he had finished the business in hand.

At last, at the end of the fourth day, he pulled the great moose down. For a day and a night he remained by the kill, eating and sleeping, turn and turn about. Then, rested, refreshed and strong, he turned his face toward camp and John Thornton. He broke into the long easy lope, and went on, hour after hour, never at loss for the tangled way, heading straight home through strange country with a certitude of direction that put man and his magnetic needle to shame.

As he held on he became more and more conscious of the new stir in the land. There was life abroad in it different from the life which had been there throughout the summer. No longer was this fact borne in upon him in some subtle, mysterious way. The birds talked of it, the squirrels chattered about it, the very breeze whispered of it. Several times he stopped and drew in the fresh morning air in great sniffs, reading a message which made him leap on with greater speed. He was oppressed with a sense of calamity happening, if it were not calamity already happened, and as he crossed the last watershed and dropped down into the valley toward camp, he proceeded with greater caution.

Three miles away he came upon a fresh trail that sent his neck hair rippling and bristling. It led straight toward camp and John Thornton. Buck hurried on, swiftly and stealthily, every nerve straining and tense, alert to the multitudinous details which told a story—all but the end. His nose gave him a varying description of the passage of the life on the heels of which he was travelling. He remarked the pregnant silence of the forest. The bird life had flitted. The squirrels were in hiding. One only he saw,—a sleek gray fellow, flattened against a gray dead limb so that he seemed a part of it, a woody excrescence upon the wood itself.

As Buck slid along with the obscurement of a gliding shadow, his nose was jerked suddenly to the side as though a positive force had gripped and pulled it. He followed the new scent into a

1 Throbbing, quivering.

2 See Appendix D1.

thicket and found Nig. He was lying on his side, dead where he had dragged himself, an arrow protruding, head and feathers, from either side of his body.

A hundred yards farther on, Buck came upon one of the sled-dogs Thornton had bought in Dawson. This dog was thrashing about in a death-struggle, directly on the trail, and Buck passed around him without stopping. From the camp came the faint sound of many voices, rising and falling in a sing-song chant. Belying forward to the edge of the clearing, he found Hans, lying on his face, feathered with arrows like a porcupine. At the same instant Buck peered out where the spruce-bough lodge had been and saw what made his hair leap straight up on his neck and shoulders. A gust of overpowering rage swept over him. He did not know that he growled, but he growled aloud with a terrible ferocity. For the last time in his life he allowed passion to usurp cunning and reason, and it was because of his great love for John Thornton that he lost his head.

The Yeehats¹ were dancing about the wreckage of the spruce-bough lodge when they heard a fearful roaring and saw rushing upon them an animal the like of which they had never seen before. It was Buck, a live hurricane of fury, hurling himself upon them in a frenzy to destroy. He sprang at the foremost man (it was the chief of the Yeehats), ripping the throat wide open till the rent jugular spouted a fountain of blood. He did not pause to worry the victim, but ripped in passing, with the next bound tearing wide the throat of a second man. There was no withstanding him. He plunged about in their very midst, tearing, rending, destroying, in constant and terrific motion which defied the arrows they discharged at him. In fact, so inconceivably rapid were his movements, and so closely were the Indians tangled together, that they shot one another with the arrows; and one young hunter, hurling a spear at Buck in mid air, drove it through the chest of another hunter with such force that the point broke through the skin of the back and stood out beyond. Then a panic seized the Yeehats, and they fled in terror to the woods, proclaiming as they fled the advent of the Evil Spirit.

And truly Buck was the Fiend incarnate, raging at their heels and dragging them down like deer as they raced through the trees. It was a fateful day for the Yeehats. They scattered far and wide over the country, and it was not till a week later that the last of the survivors gathered together in a lower valley and counted

1 A fictional native tribe.

their losses. As for Buck, wearying of the pursuit, he returned to the desolated camp. He found Pete where he had been killed in his blankets in the first moment of surprise. Thornton's desperate struggle was fresh-written on the earth, and Buck scented every detail of it down to the edge of a deep pool. By the edge, head and fore feet in the water, lay Skeet, faithful to the last. The pool itself, muddy and discolored from the sluice boxes,¹ effectually hid what it contained, and it contained John Thornton; for Buck followed his trace into the water, from which no trace led away.

All day Buck brooded by the pool or roamed restlessly about the camp. Death, as a cessation of movement, as a passing out and away from the lives of the living, he knew, and he knew John Thornton was dead. It left a great void in him, somewhat akin to hunger, but a void which ached and ached, and which food could not fill. At times, when he paused to contemplate the carcasses of the Yeehats, he forgot the pain of it; and at such times he was aware of a great pride in himself,—a pride greater than any he had yet experienced. He had killed man, the noblest game of all, and he had killed in the face of the law of club and fang. He sniffed the bodies curiously. They had died so easily. It was harder to kill a husky dog than them. They were no match at all, were it not for their arrows and spears and clubs. Thenceforward he would be unafraid of them except when they bore in their hands their arrows, spears and clubs.

Night came on, and a full moon rose high over the trees into the sky, lighting the land till it lay bathed in ghostly day. And with the coming of the night, brooding and mourning by the pool, Buck became alive to a stirring of the new life in the forest other than that which the Yeehats had made. He stood up, listening and scenting. From far away drifted a faint, sharp yelp, followed by a chorus of similar sharp yelps. As the moments passed the yelps grew closer and louder. Again Buck knew them as things heard in that other world which persisted in his memory. He walked to the centre of the open space and listened. It was the call, the many-noted call, sounding more luringly² and compellingly than ever before. And as never before, he was ready to obey. John Thornton was dead. The last tie was broken. Man and the claims of man no longer bound him.

1 A series of wooden filter trays used by placer miners to separate the pay dirt from river mud.

2 Alluringly, enticingly.

Hunting their living meat, as the Yeehats were hunting it, on the flanks of the migrating moose, the wolf pack had at last crossed over from the land of streams and timber and invaded Buck's valley. Into the clearing where the moonlight streamed, they poured in a silvery flood; and in the centre of the clearing stood Buck, motionless as a statue, waiting their coming. They were awed, so still and large he stood, and a moment's pause fell, till the boldest one leaped straight for him. Like a flash Buck struck, breaking the neck. Then he stood, without movement, as before, the stricken wolf rolling in agony behind him. Three others tried it in sharp succession; and one after the other they drew back, streaming blood from slashed throats or shoulders.

This was sufficient to fling the whole pack forward, pell-mell, crowded together, blocked and confused by its eagerness to pull down the prey. Buck's marvellous quickness and agility stood him in good stead. Pivoting on his hind legs, and snapping and gashing, he was everywhere at once, presenting a front which was apparently unbroken so swiftly did he whirl and guard from side to side. But to prevent them from getting behind him, he was forced back, down past the pool and into the creek bed, till he brought up against a high gravel bank. He worked along to a right angle in the bank which the men had made in the course of mining, and in this angle he came to bay, protected on three sides and with nothing to do but face the front.

And so well did he face it, that at the end of half an hour the wolves drew back discomfited. The tongues of all were out and lolling, the white fangs showing cruelly white in the moonlight. Some were lying down with heads raised and ears pricked forward; others stood on their feet, watching him; and still others were lapping water from the pool. One wolf, long and lean and gray, advanced cautiously, in a friendly manner, and Buck recognized the wild brother with whom he had run for a night and a day. He was whining softly, and, as Buck whined, they touched noses.

Then an old wolf, gaunt and battle-scarred, came forward. Buck writhed his lips into the preliminary of a snarl, but sniffed noses with him. Whereupon the old wolf sat down, pointed nose at the moon, and broke out the long wolf howl. The others sat down and howled. And now the call came to Buck in unmistakable accents. He, too, sat down and howled. This over, he came out of his angle and the pack crowded around him, sniffing in half-friendly, half-savage manner. The leaders lifted the yelp of the pack and sprang away into the woods. The wolves swung in

behind, yelping in chorus. And Buck ran with them, side by side with the wild brother, yelping as he ran.

And here may well end the story of Buck. The years were not many when the Yeehats noted a change in the breed of timber wolves; for some were seen with splashes of brown on head and muzzle, and with a rift of white centring down the chest. But more remarkable than this, the Yeehats tell of a Ghost Dog that runs at the head of the pack. They are afraid of this Ghost Dog, for it has cunning greater than they, stealing from their camps in the fierce winters, robbing their traps, slaying their dogs, and defying their bravest hunters.

Nay, the tale grows worse. Hunters there are who fail to return to the camp, and hunters there have been whom their tribesmen found with throats slashed cruelly open and with wolf prints about them in the snow greater than the prints of any wolf. Each fall, when the Yeehats follow the movement of the moose, there is a certain valley which they never enter. And women there are who become sad when the word goes over the fire of how the Evil Spirit came to select that valley for an abiding-place.

In the summers there is one visitor, however, to that valley, of which the Yeehats do not know. It is a great, gloriously coated wolf, like, and yet unlike, all other wolves. He crosses alone from the smiling timber land and comes down into an open space among the trees. Here a yellow stream flows from rotted moose-hide sacks and sinks into the ground, with long grasses growing through it and vegetable mould overrunning it and hiding its yellow from the sun; and here he muses for a time, howling once, long and mournfully, ere he departs.

But he is not always alone. When the long winter nights come on and the wolves follow their meat into the lower valleys, he may be seen running at the head of the pack through the pale moonlight or glimmering borealis, leaping gigantic above his fellows, his great throat a-bellow as he sings a song of the younger world, which is the song of the pack.

Appendix A: The Klondike in Reality and Myth

[The Klondike gold rush was not only the largest in history, but also one of the largest ever voluntary mass movements of population: “it has been reckoned that in the winter of 1897–98 one million people laid plans to leave home and family to seek their fortune in the Klondike and that, at the very least, one hundred thousand actually set out” (Berton 116). However, while Bonanza and Eldorado Creeks held the richest deposits of free gold in the world, almost none of the gold-seekers who set out for Dawson from southerly latitudes in 1897 struck it rich. All the valuable claims had already been staked by miners prospecting in the Northland long before the first shiploads of stampeders arrived from Seattle or San Francisco.]

1. From Tappan Adney, *The Klondike Stampede* (New York: Harper, 1900)

[(Edwin) Tappan Adney (1868–1950) was an American journalist, photographer, and canoe expert who spent sixteen months in the Klondike covering the gold rush for *Harper’s Weekly*. His book *The Klondike Stampede* is the classic eyewitness account of the event. Jack London relied on it as a reference source for his Klondike writings, and his personal copy survives, with passages marked in his own hand (Hamilton 51–52).]

On the 16th of June, 1897,¹ the steamer *Excelsior*, of the Alaska Commercial Company, steamed into the harbor of San Francisco and came to her dock near the foot of Market Street. She had on board a number of prospectors who had wintered on the Yukon River. As they walked down the gang-plank they staggered under a weight of valises, boxes, and bundles. That night the news went East over the wires, and the following morning the local papers printed the news of the arrival of the *Excelsior* with a party of returned miners and \$750,000 in gold-dust, and the sensational story that the richest strike in all American mining history had been made the fall of the year before on Bonanza Creek, a tributary of the Klondike River, a small stream entering the Yukon not far above the boundary-line between American and Canadian territory; that the old diggings were deserted, that the mines had

1 An error: the *Excelsior* arrived in San Francisco on 14 July 1897.

been partially worked that winter, and that millions more were in the ground or awaiting shipment.

On the 17th the *Portland*,¹ of the North American Transportation and Trading Company, arrived at Seattle with some sixty more miners and some \$800,000 in gold-dust, confirming the report that the new find surpassed anything ever before found in the world. The Seattle papers, equally alive to the interests of their own city, as the outfitting-point for Alaska, plunged into the story with sensational fury. If the stories of wonderful fortune needed corroboration, there were nuggets and sacks of shining gold displayed in windows and shops of hotels. One hundred and thirty thousand dollars' worth of gold, brought by one man from the new diggings, was displayed in one window in San Francisco.

In an incredibly short space of time the inhabitants of the coast cities were beside themselves with excitement. "Coast Again Gold Crazy," was the Eastern comment. A stampede unequalled in history was on. (1-2)

2. From A.C. Harris, *Alaska and the Klondike Gold Fields* (Chicago: Monroe, 1897)

[This book, subtitled *Practical Instructions for Fortune Seekers*, constructed the Klondike Gold Rush as the long promised fulfilment of the quest for El Dorado or the Golden Fleece. (London exploited this latter analogy ironically in his late story "Like Argus of the Ancient Times" [1917]). Eugenic imperialists approved of the Yukon's harshness: American empire builders, true descendants of the Norsemen, would flourish there, while the weak went to the wall. Such fantasies resonated strongly with the 21-year-old Jack London in July 1897, poor, ambitious, hungry for adventure, and excited by "the manifest destiny of the Anglo-Saxon" (Walker 187).]

Klondike is the magic word that is thrilling the whole country. It stands for millions of gold and great fortunes for hundreds of miners, who have risen from poverty to affluence in the brief period of a few months. Thousands are reading of fortunes made in the Klondike Gold Fields, and thousands of others are turning their longing eyes toward the new El Dorado.²

The old Spanish dreams of a wonderful realm somewhere in the Western Continent, made of gold and precious stones, seem almost on

1 The *Portland* arrived in Seattle on 17 July 1897, three days after the *Excelsior*.

2 El Dorado (Spanish for "The Golden One"), the subject of legends originating in the sixteenth century, referred to a lost kingdom of fabulous wealth

the point of being realized. Not since 1849, when the marvellous discoveries of gold were made in California, has there been such excitement among all classes of people. (iii)

Alaska is the land of the Nineteenth Century Argonauts; and the Golden Fleece hidden away among its snow-capped and glacier-clad mountains is not the pretty creation of mythological fame, but yellow nuggets which may be transformed into the coin of the realm. The vast territory into which these hardy soldiers of fortune penetrate is no less replete with wonders than the fabled land into which Jason is said to have led his band of adventurers....¹

What is more the Land of Gold, as we may properly term Alaska, has proved and will prove to tourist and prospector as rich in delights and marvels as the land which has come down to us in legend. It seems to be a spot chosen by nature as a field of adventure. The person, therefore, who goes from the South to the Yukon Valley will be sure to find, even though disappointed in the quest for which primarily he went, enough of the beautiful and marvelous to pay him for his trip....

Captain Butler,² an English officer who crossed the great country some little time ago, writes in the most enthusiastic terms of its scenery ...:

“Nature has here graven her image in such colossal characters that man seems to move slowly amid an ocean frozen rigid by the lapse of time—frozen into those things we call mountains, rivers and forests....

“In summer a land of sound; a land echoed with the voices of birds; the ripple of running water; the mournful music of the waving pine branch! In winter a land of silence; its great rivers glimmering in the moonlight, wrapped in their shrouds of ice; its still forests rising weird and spectral against the auroral lighted horizon; its nights so still that the moving streamers across the northern skies seem to carry to the ear a sense of sound.” (17–18)

somewhere in the Americas. It was frequently invoked during both the California and Klondike gold rushes, and in 1897 gave its name to the small creek that held the world's richest placer gold deposit.

1 The “fabled land” was Colchis, according to *Argonautica* (3rd century BC) by Apollonius of Rhodes, the classic retelling of the story of Jason's quest for the golden fleece.

2 The soldier-adventurer William Francis Butler (1838–1910); the passage that follows is adapted from his *The Wild North Land* (1873) (4–5).

Survival of the Fittest.

[An anonymous veteran of the California Gold Rush is quoted.] “The weaklings may perish ... but the strength, the bone and sinew and brawn of this movement will pull through....

“These are of the stuff that builds commonwealths and perpetuates races of men. These are of the lineage that followed the Vikings; the ancestors of these conquered with William and crossed the storm-lashed Atlantic to subdue a wilderness and found an empire.

“These are the kind of men they want, whether they return from the Yukon burdened with wealth or as poor as they went. There’s good leather in the stock that will come out of that frozen desolation, and it will work up into excellent material in a land where energy compels prosperity, and industry is rewarded with contentment.

“Suppose it is true that hardships must be endured in this quest? Are they any more disheartening than those which the poor man faces in the overcrowded cities?” (126)

Health and the Klondike.

As a rule, no one in ordinary health and strength need fear to winter in the Klondike or to risk the hardships incident to getting there, merely on account of the Arctic cold. The bracing effect of the northern climate will probably prove beneficial to many.... Scientific records have well established that longevity increases as residence is advanced from the equator towards the poles. There is more risk of disease in a voyage to Panama or India than in one to Behring Strait or Herschel Island.¹

But weak hearts and weak lungs cannot face northern blasts. Rheumatism unfits for such tests. People of purely sedentary habits take big chances on the overland trails and in the gulches. Weak eyes would be severely tried and, perhaps, blinded by the glare of the snow-clad land. Physical exhaustion, colds, scurvy,² rheumatism and snow blindness are the ills chiefly to be dreaded by the Alaskan gold-hunters, and any who are subject to troubles of the heart, throat or lungs should stay religiously away from the Klondike. (180)

1 The Bering (as it is now spelled) Strait separates Russia from Alaska and connects the Arctic and North Pacific Oceans; Herschel Island in the Beaufort Sea is the northernmost point of the YT.

2 A wasting disease, fatal if untreated, caused by a vitamin C deficiency; Jack London contracted a serious case of it in the Klondike in May 1898.

Appendix B: The Animal Story

From Charles G.D. Roberts, “Introductory: The Animal Story,” in *The Kindred of the Wild: A Book of Animal Life* (Boston: L.C. Page, 1902)

[*The Kindred of the Wild* by the Canadian man of letters Sir Charles G(eorge) D(ouglas) Roberts (1860–1943) anticipates *The Call of the Wild*’s title, subject, and themes. Illustrated by Charles Livingston Bull, who would soon illustrate both *The Call of the Wild* and *Before Adam*, it contains twelve short stories realistically describing encounters between predators and prey, animal and human, in a Northland setting. “Wild Motherhood,” for example, deals with a wolf’s attempts to kill a trapped moose calf to feed his pregnant, injured mate. The bull moose episode in *The Call of the Wild* (CW 124–27) exhibits the strong influence of *Kindred*. Roberts’s collection is prefaced by the following essay, which sketches the evolution of the animal tale.]

Alike in matter and in method, the animal story, as we have it to-day, may be regarded as a culmination. The animal story, of course, in one form or another, is as old as the beginnings of literature. Perhaps the most engrossing part in the life-drama of primitive man was that played by the beasts which he hunted, and by those which hunted him. They preyed incessantly upon his perceptions. They furnished both material and impulse for his first gropings toward pictorial art. When he acquired the kindred art of telling a story, they supplied his earliest themes; and they suggested the hieroglyphs by means of which, on carved bone or painted rock,¹ he first gave his narrative a form to outlast the spoken breath. We may not unreasonably infer that the first animal story—the remote but authentic ancestor of “Mowgli” and “Lobo” and “Krag”²—was a story of some successful hunt, when success meant life to the starving family; or of some desperate escape, when the truth of the narrative was attested, to the hearers squatted

1 In 1902, the same year that *The Kindred of the Wild* was published, the scientific community finally accepted the authenticity of prehistoric paintings, chiefly of animals, on the walls of caves such as Altamira in northern Spain.

2 Mowgli, a boy raised by wolves, is the protagonist of several of the famous animal tales in the two *Jungle Books* (1894, 1895) by Rudyard Kipling; Lobo, a grey wolf, is the protagonist of the first tale in the collection *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898) by Ernest Thompson Seton (1860–1946); “Krag, the Kootenay Ram” is a tale collected in Seton’s *Lives of the Hunted* (1901).

trembling about their fire, by the sniffings of the baffled bear or tiger at the rock-barred mouth of the cave....

Somewhat later, when men had begun to harass their souls, and their neighbours, with problems of life and conduct, then these same animals, hourly and in every aspect thrust beneath the eyes of their observation, served to point the moral of their tales. The beasts, not being in a position to resent the ignoble office thrust upon them, were compelled to do duty as concrete types of those obvious virtues and vices of which alone the unsophisticated ethical sense was ready to take cognisance. In this way, as soon as composition became a *métier*, was born the fable....

These earliest observers of animal life were compelled by the necessities of the case to observe truly, if not deeply. Pitting their wits against those of their four-foot rivals, they had to know their antagonists, and respect them, in order to overcome them. But it was only the most salient characteristics of each species that concerned the practical observer. It was simple to remember that the tiger was cruel, the fox cunning, the wolf rapacious. And so, as advancing civilisation drew an ever widening line between man and the animals, and men became more and more engrossed in the interests of their own kind, the personalities of the wild creatures which they had once known so well became obscured to them, and the creatures themselves came to be regarded, for the purposes of literature, as types or symbols merely,—except in those cases, equally obstructive to exact observation, where they were revered as temporary tenements of the spirits of departed kinsfolk. The characters in that great beast-epic of the middle ages, *Reynard the Fox*, though far more elaborately limned than those which play their succinct roles in the fables of Aesop,¹ are at the same time in their elaboration far more alien to the truths of wild nature. Reynard, Isegrim, Bruin, and Greybeard² have little resemblance to the fox, the wolf, the bear, and the badger, as patience, sympathy, and the camera reveal them to us to-day.

The advent of Christianity ... did not make for a closer understanding between man and the lower animals. While it was militant, fighting for its life against the forces of paganism, its effort was to set man at odds with the natural world, and fill his eyes with the wonders of the spiritual. Man was the only thing of consequence on earth, and

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- 1 Reynard the Fox is a recurring character in many medieval beast fables. One of the earliest and most extensive cycles is the Old French *Le Roman de Renart* (later 12th century CE) attributed to Pierre de Saint-Cloud. The beast fables of the Ancient Greek Aesop (6th century BCE) are famous worldwide.
 - 2 Recurring characters in the “Reynard the Fox” cycles include Isegrim the wolf, Bruin the Bear, and Greybeard (or Grimbart) the Badger.

of man, not his body, but his soul. Nature was the ally of the enemy. The way of nature was the way of death. In man alone was the seed of the divine. Of what concern could be the joy or pain of creatures of no soul, to-morrow returning to the dust? To strenuous spirits, their eyes fixed upon the fear of hell for themselves, and the certainty of it for their neighbours, it smacked of sin to take thought of the feelings of such evanescent products of corruption....

With the spread of freedom and the broadening out of all intellectual interests which characterise these modern days, the lower kindreds began to regain their old place in the concern of man. The revival of interest in the animals found literary expression (to classify roughly) in two forms, which necessarily overlap each other now and then, viz., the story of adventure and the anecdote of observation. Hunting as a recreation, pursued with zest from pole to tropics by restless seekers after the new, supplied a species of narrative singularly akin to what the first animal stories must have been,—narratives of desperate encounter, strange peril, and hairbreadth escape. Such hunters' stories and travellers' tales are rarely conspicuous for the exactitude of their observation; but that was not the quality at first demanded of them by fireside readers. The attention of the writer was focussed, not upon the peculiarities or the emotions of the beast protagonist in each fierce, brief drama, but upon the thrill of the action, the final triumph of the human actor. The inevitable tendency of these stories of adventure with beasts was to awaken interest in animals, and to excite a desire for exact knowledge of their traits and habits. The interest and the desire evoked the natural historian, the inheritor of the half-forgotten mantle of Pliny.¹ Precise and patient scientists made the animals their care, observing with microscope and measure, comparing bones, assorting families, subdividing subdivisions, till at length all the beasts of significance to man were ticketed neatly, and laid bare, as far as the inmost fibre of their material substance was concerned, to the eye of popular information.

Altogether admirable and necessary as was this development at large, another, of richer or at least more spiritual significance, was going on at home. Folk who loved their animal comrades—their dogs, horses, cats, parrots, elephants—were observing, with the wonder and interest of discoverers, the astonishing fashion in which the mere instincts of these so-called irrational creatures were able to simulate the operations of reason. The results of this observation were written down, till “anecdotes of animals” came to form a not inconsiderable

1 I.e., Pliny the Elder (CE 23–79), Roman author of the pioneering scientific work known as the *Natural History*.

body of literature. The drift of all these data was overwhelmingly toward one conclusion. The mental processes of the animals observed were seen to be far more complex than the observers had supposed. Where instinct was called in to account for the elaborate ingenuity with which a dog would plan and accomplish the outwitting of a rival, or the nice judgment with which an elephant, with no nest-building ancestors behind him to instruct his brain, would choose and adjust the teak-logs which he was set to pile, it began to seem as if that faithful faculty was being overworked.... But when instinct and coincidence had done all that could be asked of them, there remained a great unaccounted-for body of facts; and men were forced at last to accept the proposition that, within their varying limitations, animals can and do reason. As far, at least, as the mental intelligence is concerned, the gulf dividing the lowest of the human species from the highest of the animals has in these latter days been reduced to a very narrow psychological fissure.

Whether avowedly or not, it is with the psychology of animal life that the representative animal stories of to-day are first of all concerned. Looking deep into the eyes of certain of the four-footed kindred, we have been startled to see therein a something, before unrecognised, that answered to our inner and intellectual, if not spiritual selves. We have suddenly attained a new and clearer vision. We have come face to face with personality, where we were blindly wont to predicate mere instinct and automatism. It is as if one should step carelessly out of one's back door, and marvel to see unrolling before his new-awakened eyes the peaks and seas and misty valleys of an unknown world. Our chief writers of animal stories at the present day may be regarded as explorers of this unknown world, absorbed in charting its topography. They work, indeed, upon a substantial foundation of known facts. They are minutely scrupulous as to their natural history, and assiduous contributors to that science. But above all are they diligent in their search for the motive beneath the action. Their care is to catch the varying, elusive personalities which dwell back of the luminous brain windows of the dog, the horse, the deer, or wrap themselves in reserve behind the inscrutable eyes of all the cats, or sit aloof in the gaze of the hawk and the eagle. The animal story at its highest point of development is a psychological romance constructed on a framework of natural science.

The real psychology of the animals, so far as we are able to grope our way toward it by deduction and induction combined, is a very different thing from the psychology of certain stories of animals which paved the way for the present vogue. Of these, such books as

Beautiful Joe and *Black Beauty*¹ are deservedly conspicuous examples. It is no detracting from the merit of these books, which have done great service in awakening a sympathetic understanding of the animals and sharpening our sense of kinship with all that breathe, to say that their psychology is human. Their animal characters think and feel as human beings would think and feel under like conditions. This marks the stage which these works occupy in the development of the animal story.

The next stage must be regarded as, in literature, a climax indeed, but not the climax in this genre. I refer to the "Mowgli" stories of Mr. Kipling. In these tales the animals are frankly humanised. Their individualisation is distinctly human, as are also their mental and emotional processes, and their highly elaborate powers of expression. Their notions are complex; whereas the motives of real animals, so far as we have hitherto been able to judge them, seem to be essentially simple, in the sense that the motive dominant at a given moment quite obliterates, for the time, all secondary motives. Their reasoning powers and their constructive imagination are far beyond anything which present knowledge justifies us in ascribing to the inarticulate kindreds. To say this is in no way to depreciate such work, but merely to classify it. There are stories being written now which, for interest and artistic value, are not to be mentioned in the same breath with the "Mowgli" tales, but which nevertheless occupy a more advanced stage in the evolution of this genre.

It seems to me fairly safe to say that this evolution is not likely to go beyond the point to which it has been carried to-day. In such a story, for instance, as that of "Krag, the Kootenay Ram," by Mr. Ernest Seton, the interest centres about the personality, individuality, mentality, of an animal, as well as its purely physical characteristics. The field of animal psychology so admirably opened is an inexhaustible world of wonder. Sympathetic exploration may advance its boundaries to a degree of which we hardly dare to dream; but such expansion cannot be called evolution. There would seem to be no further evolution possible, unless based upon a hypothesis that animals have souls. As souls are apt to elude exact observation, to forecast any such development would seem to be at best merely fanciful.

The animal story, as we now have it, is a potent emancipator. It frees us for a little from the world of shop-worn utilities, and from the

1 *Black Beauty* (1877) by Anna Sewell (1820–78) was one of the first popular novels to use a first-person animal narrator; in Sewell's tradition, *Beautiful Joe* (1893) by (Margaret) Marshall Saunders (1861–1947) is the "autobiography" of a mongrel dog.

mean tenement of self of which we do well to grow weary. It helps us to return to nature, without requiring that we at the same time return to barbarism. It leads us back to the old kinship of earth, without asking us to relinquish by way of toll any part of the wisdom of the ages, any fine essential of the “large result of time.”¹ The clear and candid life to which it reinitiates us, far behind though it lies in the long upward march of being, holds for us this quality. It has ever the more significance, it has ever the richer gift of refreshment and renewal, the more humane the heart and spiritual the understanding which we bring to the intimacy of it. (15–29)

1 A misquotation of part of line 12 of Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s poem “Locksley Hall” (1842): it should read, “long result of time.”

Appendix C: Darwin on Dogs and Men

[The “broadening out of all intellectual interests” and subsequent weakening of the grip of Christian dogma that according to Charles G.D. Roberts changed our modern attitude to animals (Appendix B) were consequences of Darwinism. Darwin, a great dog-lover and keen observer of canine behaviour, frequently pondered the evolutionary significance of the relation between ourselves and our longest domesticated animal. Jack London was saturated in Darwinian thought and the following passages are variously reflected in *The Call of the Wild* or “Bâtard.”]

1. From Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1868)

[A]t a period between four and five thousand years ago, various breeds, viz. pariah dogs, greyhounds, common hounds, mastiffs, house-dogs, lapdogs, and turnspits, existed, more or less closely resembling our present breeds. But there is not sufficient evidence that any of these ancient dogs belonged to the same identical sub-varieties with our present dogs. As long as man was believed to have existed on this earth only about 6000 years,¹ this fact of the great diversity of the breeds at so early a period was an argument of much weight that they had proceeded from several wild sources, for there would not have been sufficient time for their divergence and modification. But now that we know, from the discovery of flint tools embedded with the remains of extinct animals in districts which have since undergone great geographical changes, that man has existed for an incomparably longer period, and bearing in mind that the most barbarous nations possess domestic dogs, the argument from insufficient time falls away greatly in value.

Long before the period of any historical record the dog was domesticated in Europe. In the Danish Middens of the Neolithic or Newer Stone period,² bones of a canine animal are imbedded. (18)

1 Literalist interpreters of the Bible asserted that the Earth was created in 4004 BC.

2 I.e., the *køkkenmødding* (“kitchen middens” in Danish), refuse mounds found on the coast of Denmark, chiefly consisting of shells discarded by prehistoric peoples.

The main argument in favour of the several breeds of the dog being the descendants of distinct wild stocks, is their resemblance in various countries to distinct species still existing there.... [T]here is no a priori difficulty in the belief that several canine species have been domesticated.... Members of the dog family inhabit nearly the whole world; and several species agree pretty closely in habits and structure with our several domesticated dogs.... Social animals are the most easily subjugated by man, and several species of *Canidae*¹ hunt in packs. It deserves notice ... that at an extremely ancient period, when man first entered any country, the animals living there would have felt no instinctive or inherited fear of him, and would consequently have been tamed far more easily than at present. (19–20)

The accurate and sagacious Richardson says, “The resemblance between the Northern American wolves ... and the domestic dogs of the Indians is so great that the size and strength of the wolf seems to be the only difference. I have more than once mistaken a band of wolves for the dogs of a party of Indians; and the howl of the animals of both species is prolonged so exactly in the same key that even the practised ear of the Indian fails at times to discriminate them.” He adds that the more northern Esquimaux dogs² are not only extremely like the grey wolves of the Arctic circle in form and colour, but also nearly equal them in size. Dr. Kane has often seen in his teams of sledge-dogs the oblique eye ..., the drooping tail, and scared look of the wolf. In disposition the Esquimaux dogs differ little from wolves, and, according to Dr. Hayes, they are capable of no attachment to man, and are so savage, that when hungry they will attack even their masters. According to Kane they readily become feral. Their affinity is so close with wolves that they frequently cross with them, and the Indians take the whelps of wolves “to improve the breed of their dogs.” The half-bred wolves sometimes ... cannot be tamed, “though this case is rare;” but they do not become thoroughly well broken in till the second or third generation. These facts show that there can be but little, if any, sterility between the Esquimaux dog and the wolf, for otherwise they would not be used to improve the breed. As Dr. Hayes says of these dogs, “reclaimed wolves they doubtless are.” (21–22)

From this resemblance in several countries of the half-domesticated dogs to the wild species still living there,—from the facility with which they can often be crossed together,—from even half-tamed animals

1 The scientific family including dogs (wild and domestic), wolves, foxes, etc.

2 Malamutes or similar wolf-dogs (see Appendix D2).

being so much valued by savages,—and from the other circumstances previously remarked on which favour their domestication, it is highly probable that the domestic dogs of the world have descended from two good species of wolf (viz. *C. lupus* and *C. latrans*),¹ and from two or three other doubtful species of wolves (namely, the European, Indian, and North African forms); from at least one or two South American canine species; from several races or species of the jackal; and perhaps from one or more extinct species....

It cannot be objected to the view of several canine species having been anciently domesticated, that these animals are tamed with difficulty.... There is not much difference ... in habits between the domestic dogs of the North American Indians and the wolves of that country, or between the Eastern pariah dogs and jackals, or between the dogs which have run wild in various countries and the several natural species of the family. The habit of barking, however, which is almost universal with domesticated dogs ... seems an exception; but this habit is soon lost and soon reacquired. (26–27)

2. From Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1871)

There can be no doubt that the difference between the mind of the lowest man and that of the highest animal is immense.... Nevertheless the difference ... great as it is, is certainly one of degree and not of kind. We have seen that the senses and intuitions, the various emotions and faculties, such as love, memory, attention, curiosity, imitation, reason, &c., of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or even sometimes in a well-developed condition, in the lower animals. They are also capable of some inherited improvement, as we see in the domestic dog compared with the wolf or jackal. (104–05)

3. From Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1872)

[From Chapter V: Special Expressions of Animals.]

The Dog.—I have already described ... the appearance of a dog approaching another dog with hostile intentions, namely, with erected ears, eyes intently directed forwards, hair on the neck and back bristling, gait remarkably stiff, with the tail upright and rigid. So familiar is this appearance to us, that an angry man is sometimes said “to have his back up.” ...

1 *Canis lupus* is the grey or timber wolf; *Canis latrans* is the coyote.

When a dog is on the point of springing on his antagonist, he utters a savage growl; the ears are pressed closely backwards, and the upper lip ... is retracted out of the way of his teeth, especially of his canines. These movements may be observed with dogs and puppies in their play. But if a dog gets really savage in his play, his expression immediately changes. This, however, is simply due to the lips and ears being drawn back with much greater energy. If a dog only snarls at another, the lip is generally retracted on one side alone, namely towards his enemy.

The movements of a dog whilst exhibiting affection towards his master ... consist in the head and whole body being lowered and thrown into flexuous movements, with the tail extended and wagged from side to side. The ears fall down and are drawn somewhat backwards, which causes the eyelids to be elongated, and alters the whole appearance of the face. The lips hang loosely, and the hair remains smooth. All these movements or gestures are explicable, as I believe, from their standing in complete antithesis to those naturally assumed by a savage dog under a directly opposite state of mind....

Dogs have another and striking way of exhibiting their affection, namely, by licking the hands or faces of their masters.... This habit probably originated in the females carefully licking their puppies—the dearest object of their love—for the sake of cleansing them. They also often give their puppies, after a short absence, a few cursory licks, apparently from affection. Thus the habit will have become associated with the emotion of love, however it may afterwards be aroused. It is now so firmly inherited or innate, that it is transmitted equally to both sexes. A female terrier of mine lately had her puppies destroyed, and though at all times a very affectionate creature, I was much struck with the manner in which she then tried to satisfy her instinctive maternal love by extending it on me; and her desire to lick my hands rose to an insatiable passion.

The same principle probably explains why dogs, when feeling affectionate, like rubbing against their masters and being rubbed or patted by them, for from the nursing of their puppies, contact with a beloved object has become firmly associated in their minds with the emotion of love.

The feeling of affection of a dog towards his master is combined with a strong sense of submission, which is akin to fear. Hence dogs not only lower their bodies and crouch a little as they approach their masters, but sometimes throw themselves on the ground with their bellies upwards. This is a movement as completely opposite as is possible to any show of resistance. I formerly possessed a large dog who was not at all afraid to fight with other dogs; but a wolf-like

shepherd-dog in the neighbourhood, though not ferocious and not so powerful as my dog, had a strange influence over him. When they met on the road, my dog used to run to meet him, with his tail partly tucked in between his legs and hair not erected; and then he would throw himself on the ground, belly upwards. By this action he seemed to say more plainly than by words, "Behold, I am your slave."

A pleasurable and excited state of mind, associated with affection, is exhibited by some dogs in a very peculiar manner; namely, by grinning.... I have also seen it in a Spitz and in a sheep-dog.... The upper lip during the act of grinning is retracted, as in snarling, so that the canines are exposed, and the ears are drawn backwards; but the general appearance of the animal clearly shows that anger is not felt. Sir C. Bell remarks "Dogs, in their expression of fondness, have a slight eversion of the lips, and grin and sniff amidst their gambols, in a way that resembles laughter." ... On the other hand, dogs, when playing with their comrades or masters, almost always pretend to bite each other; and they then retract, though not energetically, their lips and ears. Hence I suspect that there is a tendency in some dogs, whenever they feel lively pleasure combined with affection, to act through habit and association on the same muscles, as in playfully biting each other, or their masters' hands....

I have seen a dog much terrified at a band of musicians who were playing loudly outside the house, with every muscle of his body trembling, with his heart palpitating so quickly that the beats could hardly be counted, and panting for breath with widely open mouth, in the same manner as a terrified man does....

Almost all the expressive movements now described, with the exception of the grinning from joy, are innate or instinctive, for they are common to all the individuals, young and old, of all the breeds. Most of them are likewise common to the aboriginal parents of the dog, namely the wolf and jackal; and some of them to other species of the same group. Tamed wolves and jackals, when caressed by their masters, jump about for joy, wag their tails, lower their ears, lick their masters' hands, crouch down, and even throw themselves on the ground belly upwards. (116-25)

[From Chapter XIV: Concluding Remarks]

That there exists in man a strong tendency to imitation, independently of the conscious will, is certain.... The jackal and the wolf have learnt under confinement to imitate the barking of the dog. How the barking of the dog, which serves to express various emotions and desires, and which is so remarkable from having been acquired since the animal

was domesticated, and from being inherited in different degrees by different breeds, was first learnt, we do not know; but may we not suspect that imitation has had something to do with its acquisition, owing to dogs having long lived in strict association with so loquacious an animal as man? (356–57)

Appendix D: Outside and Inside Dogs in the Northland

1. From Edward Jesse, *Anecdotes of Dogs* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1858)

[Jesse (1780–1868) was an English naturalist known for his popular books on natural history. Jack London owned a “well-read” copy of *Anecdotes of Dogs* (Hamilton 172) and almost certainly used it as a resource while composing *The Call of the Wild*, as may be inferred from the following passages on the respective qualities of the two breeds that, fused together in Buck, constitute his exceptional endowment.]

[From “The Colley, or Shepherd’s Dog”]

Often as I have attempted to make acquaintance with a colley-dog, I have never been able to succeed in producing any degree of familiarity. On the contrary, he has always regarded me with looks of shyness and suspicion. His master appears to be the only being to whom he is capable of showing any degree of attachment; and coiled up on his great-coat, or reposing at his feet, he eyes a stranger with distrust, if not with anger. At the same time there is a look of extraordinary intelligence, which perhaps is possessed by no other animal in a greater degree. It has been said of him, that although he has not the noble port of the Newfoundland dog, the affectionate fondling of the spaniel, nor the fierce attachment which renders the mastiff so efficient a guard, yet he exceeds them all in readiness and extent of intelligence, combined with a degree of docility unequalled, perhaps, by any other animal in existence. There is, if the expression may be used, a philosophic look about him, which shows thought, patience, energy, and vigilance. (229)

[From “The St. Bernard Dog”]

Their natural sagacity is, indeed, so sharpened by long practice and careful training, that a sort of language is established between them and the good monks of St. Bernard,¹ by which mutual communications are made, such as few persons living in situations of less constant and severe trials can have any just conceptions of. When we look at the extraordinary sagacity of the animal, his great strength, and his

1 A hospice (founded CE 1049) in the Alps between Switzerland and Italy, where the St. Bernard dog was first bred.

instinctive faculties, we shall feel convinced how admirably he is adapted to fulfil the purpose for which he is chiefly employed,—that of saving lives in snowstorms. (241)

It is stated that the monks themselves, when out upon search for travellers, have frequently owed their preservation to their dogs, in a manner which would seem to show that the dogs are endued with a presentiment of danger....

The monks stated two or three cases where the dogs had actually prevented them from returning to the convent by their accustomed route, when it afterwards turned out, that if they had not followed the guidance of their dog in his deviation, they would have been overwhelmed by an avalanche. Whether the dog may be endued with an intuitive foreboding of danger, or whether he may have the faculty of detecting symptoms not perceptible to our duller senses, must be determined by philosophers....

There is an instance on record of a dog having, by his importunity and peculiar gestures, induced his mistress to quit a washhouse in which she was at work, the roof of which fell in almost immediately afterwards. Dogs have been known to give the alarm of fire, by howling and other signs, before it was perceived by any of the inmates of the house. (243–44)

2. From Tappan Adney, *The Klondike Stampede* (New York: Harper, 1900)

[Adney (see Appendix A1) here describes the importance of dogs in the Northland, distinguishes “inside” from “outside” dogs, and offers some observations on the behaviour and treatment of sled-dogs. Jack London evidently took much of this information to heart.]

In every part of the world the dog is the companion and helper of man, but nowhere is he so essentially a part of the life of the people as in the northern part of this continent, from Greenland to Behring Sea....

The best type of the Yukon dog is the true Eskimo, known by the miners as “Malamut,”¹ from a tribe of Eskimo of that name at the mouth of the Yukon. It stands about as high as the Scotch collie, which it resembles a little; but with its thick, short neck, sharp muzzle, oblique eyes, short, pointed ears, dense, coarse hair, which protects it from the severest cold, it is more wolf-like than any other variety of

1 Now usually “Alaskan malamute.”

dog. With its bushy tail carried tightly curled over its back, with head and ears erect, and with its broad chest, it is the expression of energy, vitality, and self-reliance. In color it varies from a dirty white through black and white to jet black; but there is also another sort, a grizzled gray, which suggests an admixture of gray wolf, with which it is known to mate. Indeed, these wolf-colored dogs so closely resemble a wolf that if the two were placed side by side a little distance off it would be difficult to distinguish them, but at a nearer view the dog lacks somewhat the hard, sinister expression of his wild relative. The best type of dog is still to be found among the Eskimos as well as among the Indian tribes of the interior, but these latter, known as “Siwash”¹ dogs, are frequently inferior in size, though very tough. The pure type has undergone further change by an admixture of “outside” dog, such as St. Bernard, Newfoundland, and mongrel, that the miners have brought in. The “inside” dog, as the native dog is called by the miners, endures hunger and cold better than the “outside,” and is therefore preferred for long journeys over the snow, where speed is desired and food is scarce or hard to carry or procure. For short-distance, heavy freighting the large St. Bernard or mastiff is unsurpassed, but it eats more....

The load a strong dog can pull is surprising. With the driver at the “gee-pole” of the sled to help it over inequalities, a dog will drag three or four hundred pounds along a good trail as fast as a man walks.... I have seen a team of five native dogs in Bonanza Creek hauling 700 feet of green spruce lumber, weighing 1600 pounds.²

It has been said that the native dog does not exhibit affection for his master; but that is not always the case. It depends upon what has been his early training—like master, like dog. As a rule, he is stolid and indifferent, deigning to notice a human only in sharp barks and howls, the most dismal sound in nature, but he hardly ever snaps, and after the first surprise at an act of kindness has worn off he shows himself capable of marked affection.

In a community of dogs, as with wolves, there is one who is master, a supremacy attained only after fierce and often bloody encounters. I say *often* bloody, for though actual hostilities are accompanied by an uproarious medley of snarls and other expressions of dog wrath, blood rarely flows, nor is actual pain inflicted, unless a keen fang has found lodgement in a leg; for the beast is protected by fur so dense that the most violent shakings have little effect. The frequent encounters,

1 An insulting term meaning “Indian” or “Native” in Chinook jargon, the trade pidgin of the Pacific Northwest; “Siwash” probably derives from French *sauvage* (“savage”).

2 700 ft = 213 m; 1600 lb = 726 kg.

therefore, sound and look a great deal worse than they really are, a fact apparently well understood by the dogs themselves, for a Malamut dog is the biggest bluffer on earth, as well as the coolest. (208–11)

A Malamut makes a poor watch-dog, being a natural born thief himself, and proud than otherwise of the fact. Consequently, everything must be put out of reach that he can steal. He values his importance without conceit or vanity; throws himself down to sleep in the way of everybody by day or night, in delightful confidence that no one will touch or hurt him. In harness he is really proud of his work, and trots along with tail tightly curled, head up, and ears erect, with a happy, contented “smile.” The poor “outside” dog—one feels sorry for him. He is often a pet or a game dog, and the drudgery of harness is galling to his pride. One meets him on the trail, tugging hard at a load of freight for his master, with tail and head down. He casts his eyes up into yours with a shamed expression which says, “Who ever thought that I would come to this!” (213)

The dog-driver who values his dogs never uses a club or stick; yet he does what seems more cruel, but really is not, the dog-chain, or he pounds his thick-hair sides with his fist. The regular dog-driver’s whip, which a few carry, is a seal-leather, eight-strand, round plait as thick as one’s thumb and five feet long, tapering to a point, with a wooden handle ten inches long. (215)

[Details provided by a dog-sled driver of the trip from Dawson to Dyea.] The daily allowance of each dog was one cup of rice and one pound of bacon, and one-half pound of fish at night. Dogs are fed only once a day, but sometimes, when the men stop at noon to boil a kettle of tea and eat a doughnut, each are given a doughnut; but the rule is to give them all they can eat once a day.

To load the sleigh, the bed-cover is placed over the sleigh, and the goods laid on, and the cover folded over close and lashed tight, so that if the sleigh rolls over nothing can spill out....

The native dog needs no care, further than if his feet get sore he may come into the tent and dry them. Dog moccasins (little pockets with leather soles and cloth tops) are sometimes used....

One who pictures the frozen smooth river as a pond cannot understand the difficulties of the trail. The first team up from Circle City this winter was thirty-five days making the journey, and chopped its way forty times across the river.

Twenty-five to thirty days was considered good time out to Dyea in early winter, and eighteen in returning in spring. The quickest time

between Dawson and the coast is claimed by Bob Ensley in sixteen days.¹ (223–24)

**3. From Jack London, “Husky—The Wolf-Dog of the North,”
Harper’s Weekly 44 (30 June 1900): 611**

[This short article expresses London’s admiration for the inside wolf-dog of the Northland, and he inserted material from it almost directly into “Bâtard” and *The Call of the Wild*. Buck’s exceptional qualities are shown by how quickly he, an outside dog, adapts to an unforgiving environment to which the husky has been inured for millennia.]

Neck, from head to shoulders, a mass of bristling hair; sharp-pointed ears, long-snouted, lips snarling, fangs dripping; yelping rather than barking; wolfish of aspect and not nice to look upon when in anger—this is the husky, or wolf-dog of the North. Much has been said of the Klondike, but these magnificent brutes, which in the beginning made that frigid El Dorado possible, have received little more than passing comment. Nor has this neglect been due to their being but the humble servants of the master, man. They are far from humble, as their wild ancestry attests. They may be beaten into submission, but that will not prevent them still snarling their hatred. They may be starved into apparent docility, and then die, suddenly, with teeth locked fast in a brother’s throat, torn to pieces by their comrades....

As a type of endurance, no better evolved product of natural selection need be sought.... Only the fittest, in a struggle for existence extending through a thousand thousand generations, have survived.... Domesticated by the savage autochthons² of that forbidding region, they may not only account their remote ancestors as wild wolves, but often their immediate forebears....

[T]he husky can be characterized as pertinacious, deceitful, sharp, and, above all, well capable of deductive reasoning. He will unerringly connect cause with effect. He is also an actor of no mean ability, concealing the most nefarious designs under the innocent exterior of a new-born lamb....

It is a very common sight to see these animals breaking the ice of a water-hole by rearing in the air and coming down upon it with their whole weight on their fore feet....

1 [Adney’s footnote:] As these words are written news arrives that in March, 1899, one team of dogs has made the trip in ten days, and that the mounted police have sent mail out in less time by relays.

2 Indigenous people.

In the summer-time, when the snow and ice are gone and man travels by canoe and poling-boat, the huskies are thrown upon their own resources.... This leaving the huskies to shift for themselves, gives rise to peculiar ethics in the North Land. A man who steals food from another is shot down without mercy. But it is different in the case of the dogs. Should a man catch one, red-handed, gorging his last piece of bacon, he may not shoot him. If he does, the dog's owner can come down upon him for his value as a draught-animal. A miners' meeting usually settles the amount. Nor is this any insignificant sum, for the prices of sled-dogs range from one to five hundred dollars, and in times of need as high as a thousand....

Fierce brutes though they be, the closest attachments often spring up between them and their masters, and when a man possesses a good dog or team he is not slow in bragging of it. In the annals of the country may be found the history of one dog-driver who wagered a thousand dollars that his favorite husky could start a thousand pounds on a level trail. Now the steel runners of a stationary sled will quickly freeze to the surface, and by the terms of the bet he was even denied the privilege of breaking the runners loose. But it was stipulated that the dog was to have three trials. The whole camp staked its dust upon one side or the other of the issue, and on the day of the trial turned out *en masse*. The dog was hitched to the loaded sled, and everything made ready. "Gee!" the master commanded from a distance. The dog swung obediently to the right, shrewdly throwing his whole weight upon the traces. "Haw!" The manoeuvre was duplicated to the left and the sled broken out. And then, "Mush on!" (the vernacular for "get up!"). The dog whined softly, driving his claws into the frozen trail, calling every muscle into play, digging away like mad. And in answer to this tremendous exertion, the sled slowly got into motion and was dragged several lengths. Let a man try the like and marvel. Of course it was an exceptional dog, but creatures are often measured by their extremes.

It is in fighting that they betray their most wolfish trait. As long as two combatants are on their feet there is no interference. The onlooking huskies merely crowd interestedly around, ready, however, for the first slip. And the instant one or the other of the dogs goes down, the whole band pitches upon him, and in the snap of a finger he is torn to shreds....

A peculiarity they are remarkable for is their howling. It can be likened to nothing on land or sea. When the frost grows bitter and the aurora-borealis trails its cold fires across the heavens, they voice their misery to the night. Heart-breaking, sobbing, it rises like a wail of lost and tortured souls, and when a thousand huskies are in full chorus it is as though the roof had tumbled in and hell stood naked to the stars. No man can hear this for the first time and preserve the equanimity of that portion of his skin which lies contiguous to his spinal column. (611)

Appendix E: Instinct, Memory, Recapitulation, and Atavism

[After Darwin, but before the development of modern genetic theory, heredity was the focus of much speculation by evolutionists. Instinct was hypothesized as a kind of memory that had been organically imprinted upon an ancestral organism, which had then somehow passed it on to succeeding generations. It was widely believed that each living creature's embryonic development rapidly recapitulated the whole evolutionary history of its phylum.¹ Atavism and feral behaviour suggested that an animal could display reverse evolution by "throwing back" to an ancestral form. Such phenomena suggested that an individual organism "contained" its ancestors. In this brew of suggestive ideas, Jack London found theoretical (and emotional) justification not only for why Buck hearkened to the call of the wild, but also for why a human reader might strongly identify with a canine protagonist.]

1. From Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology*. 1855. 3rd ed. Vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton, 1890)

[Spencer (1820–1903) was an English thinker whose works were intended as integral parts of a "synthetic philosophy" that systematically explained all phenomena in positivist and progressionist evolutionary terms. Spencer's influence permeates every aspect of London's thought and literary style.]

[W]hile, on the one hand, Instinct may be regarded as a kind of organized memory; on the other hand, Memory may be regarded as a kind of incipient instinct. The automatic actions of a bee building one of its wax cells, answer to outer relations so constantly experienced that they are, as it were, organically remembered. (445)

Memory ... pertains to that class of psychical states which are in process of being organized. It continues so long as the organizing of them continues, and disappears when the organization of them is complete.... By multiplication of experiences ... remembrance is made

1 One of the primary divisions of organisms based on common descent: e.g., the phylum *Chordata* includes all vertebrates, from sea-squirts to humans.

stronger—the internal cohesions are better adjusted to the external persistences; and the response is rendered more appropriate. By further multiplication of experiences, the internal relations are at last structurally registered in harmony with the external ones; and so, conscious memory passes into unconscious or organic memory. (452)

[T]he human brain is an organized register of infinitely-numerous experiences received during the evolution of life, or rather, during the evolution of that series of organisms through which the human organism has been reached. The effects of the most uniform and frequent of these experiences have been successively bequeathed, principal and interest; and have slowly amounted to that high intelligence which lies latent in the brain of the infant—which the infant in after life exercises and perhaps strengthens or further complicates—and which, with minute additions, it bequeaths to future generations. (470–71)

2. From Ernst Haeckel, *The History of Creation: or, the Development of the Earth and Its Inhabitants by the Action of Natural Causes*. 1868. Vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton, 1880)

[Haeckel (1834–1919), the German biologist and philosopher, served as Darwinism’s most prominent advocate in Germany. His “biogenetic law” (enumerated below) was enormously influential on early evolutionist theory about heredity. (Spencer paraphrases it in his last quoted paragraph above.) London’s self-identification as a “materialistic monist” (Appendix G1) derives directly from his enthusiastic reading of Haeckel.]

Is it not in the highest degree remarkable that all vertebrate animals of the most different classes—fishes, amphibious animals, reptiles, birds, and mammals—in the first periods of their embryonic development cannot be distinguished at all, and even much later, at a time when reptiles and birds are already distinctly different from mammals, that the dog and the man are almost identical? (308–09)

[O]ntogenesis, or the development of the individual, is a short and quick repetition (recapitulation) of phylogenesis, or the development of the tribe to which it belongs, determined by the laws of inheritance and adaptation. (309–10; italics in original)

As so high and complicated an organism as that of man, or the organism of every other mammal, rises upwards from a simple cellular state,

and as it progresses in its differentiation and perfecting it passes through the same series of transformations which its animal progenitors have passed through, during immense spaces of time, inconceivable ages ago. (310)

3. From Samuel Butler, *Life and Habit* (London: Trübner, 1878)

[Butler (1835–1902) was an English novelist now best remembered for his satirical utopia *Erewhon* (1872). An amateur evolutionist, Butler wrote several polemical works, of which *Life and Habit* was the first, that attempt to “humanize” Darwinism by infusing it with teleological (purposive) ideas. Butler would certainly have approved of London’s idea in *The Call of the Wild* that Buck could heed a “call” from his wolf ancestors.]

Nor, if we admit personal identity between the ovum and the octogenarian,¹ is there any sufficient reason why we should not admit it between the impregnate ovum and the two factors of which it is composed, which two factors are but offshoots from two distinct personalities, of which they are as much part as the apple is of the apple-tree; so that an impregnate ovum cannot without a violation of first principles be debarred from claiming personal identity with both its parents, and hence, by an easy chain of reasoning, *with each of the impregnate ova from which its parents were developed.*

So that each ovum when impregnate should be considered not as descended from its ancestors, but as being a continuation of the personality of every ovum in the chain of its ancestry, which every ovum *it actually is* quite as truly as the octogenarian *is* the same identity with the ovum from which he has been developed. (85–86; italics in original)

In this way, then, I conceive we can fairly transfer the experience of the race to the individual, without any other meaning to our words than what they would naturally suggest; that is to say, that there is in every impregnate ovum a *bona fide* memory, which carries it back not only to the time when it was last an impregnate ovum, but to that earlier date when it was the very beginning of life at all, which same creature it still is, whether as man or ovum, and hence imbued, so far as time and circumstance allow, with all its memories. (130)

1 If we can agree that a fertilized human egg and the 80-year-old man into whom it eventually develops are the “same person.”

M. Ribot¹ says: “Originally man had considerable trouble in taming the animals which are now domesticated; and his work would have been in vain had not heredity” (memory) “come to his aid. It may be said that after man has modified a wild animal to his will, there goes on in its progeny a silent conflict between two heredities” (memories), “the one tending to fix the acquired modifications and the other to preserve the primitive instincts. The latter often get the mastery, and only after several generations is training sure of victory. But we may see that in either case heredity” (memory) “always asserts its rights.”

How marvellously is the above passage elucidated and made to fit in with the results of our recognised experience, by the simple substitution of the word “memory” for “heredity.” ...

As soon as we have grasped the notion, that instinct is only the epitome of past experience, revised, corrected, made perfect, and learnt by rote, we no longer find any desire to separate “instinct” from “mental dispositions, which have evidently been acquired and fixed by heredity,” for the simple reason that they are one and the same thing. (210–11)

4. From Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1868)

[Darwin’s definition of atavism was neutrally descriptive. However, a whole pseudo-science developed in his wake, intended to explain non-biological phenomena such as crime. A murderer, for example, might be understood as someone who had “thrown back” to a more primitive state of human development. In Stevenson’s famous tale, Dr. Jekyll takes a potion that causes him to devolve into the subhuman Mr. Hyde, in whom the “ape” from which humanity has descended has “returned,” usurping the body and mind of the civilized man. By the turn of the century, however, a “romantic” atavism had emerged. Now the primitive or prehistoric appealed because they seemed to fulfil instinctual needs of which modernity took little account. This idea is summarized in the title *The Call of the Wild* and is central to the thematics of the novella.]

[From Chapter XIII: Inheritance *continued*—Reversion or Atavism.] The great principle of inheritance to be discussed in this chapter has been recognised by agriculturists and authors of various nations, as shown by the scientific term *Atavism*, derived from *atavus*, an ancestor; by the English terms of *Reversion*, or *Throwing back*.... When the

1 The French psychologist Théodule-Armand Ribot (1839–1916).

child resembles either grandparent more closely than its immediate parents, our attention is not much arrested, though in truth the fact is highly remarkable; but when the child resembles some remote ancestor, or some distant member in a collateral line,—and we must attribute the latter case to the descent of all the members from a common progenitor,—we feel a just degree of astonishment.... The cases of reversion may be divided into two main classes, which, however, in some instances, blend into each other; namely, first, those occurring in a variety or race which has not been crossed, but has lost by variation some character that it formerly possessed, and which afterwards reappears. The second class includes all cases in which a distinguishable individual, sub-variety, race, or species, has at some former period been crossed with a distinct form, and a character derived from this cross, after having disappeared during one or several generations, suddenly reappears. (28–29)

5. John Myers O'Hara, "Atavism," *Bookman* [New York] 16 (November 1902) 229

[O'Hara (1870–1944) was a New York-based poet and stockbroker who published "Atavism" one month before London began writing *The Call of the Wild*. O'Hara's poem expresses romantic atavism: it is a call to people who have been (in Wordsworth's phrase) "too long in city pent" to seek in the wilderness "the animal thrill" that lends "a zest to life." The poem would also have appealed to the "materialistic monist" in Jack London in its final plea to follow an instinctual life "that goes/Soulless into the night." Note also that the poem's opening stanza (used, without attribution, as the novella's epigraph) draws an implicit analogy between domesticated humanity and a chained dog. On the personal relationship that developed between O'Hara and London, see Dyer 99–103.]

Atavism

Old longings nomadic leap,
 Chafing at custom's chain;
 Again from its brumal¹ sleep
 Wakens the ferine² strain.

1 Wintry.

2 Wild, untamed.

Helots of houses no more,¹
 Let us be out, be free;
 Fragrance through window and door
 Wafts from the woods, the sea.

After the torpor of will,
 Morbid with inner strife,
 Welcome the animal thrill,
 Lending a zest to life.

Banish the volumes revered,
 Sever from centuries dead;
 Ceilings the lamp flicker cheered
 Barter for stars instead.

Temple thy dreams with the trees,
 Nature thy god alone;
 Worship the sun and the breeze,
 Altars where none atone.

Voices of solitude call,
 Whisper of sedge and stream;
 Loosen the fetters that gall,
 Back to the primal scheme.

Feel the great throbbing terrene²
 Pulse in thy body beat,
 Conscious again of the green
 Verdure beneath the feet.

Callous to pain as the rose,
 Breathe with instinct's delight;
 Live the existence that goes
 Soulless into the night.

1 No longer slaves of domestic routine.

2 Of the Earth.

Appendix F: London's First Dog Story

Jack London, "Bâtard." 1902 [as "Diable—a Dog"]. In *The Faith of Men and Other Stories* (New York: Macmillan, 1904) 201–32

["Bâtard" (French for "bastard"), London's first story with a canine main character, was submitted to the monthly magazine *Cosmopolitan* on 17 January 1902, and published in the June 1902 issue, though the title and the protagonist's name were changed to the less offensive "Diable—a Dog." ("diable" is French for "devil.") The story's first book publication was as "Bâtard" (1904). One may infer from the innumerable small differences between the magazine and book versions that the later published one was closer to London's intent. Briefly, "Diable—a Dog" is a bowdlerized, slightly shortened, and less carefully edited form of "Bâtard." Moreover, in a letter of 13 March 1903 (Appendix G10) in which he indicates that he intended *The Call of the Wild* as a "companion" to it, London calls the story "Bâtard."]

"Bâtard."

Bâtard was a devil. This was recognized throughout the Northland. "Hell's Spawn" he was called by many men, but his master, Black Leclère, chose for him the shameful name "Bâtard." Now Black Leclère was also a devil, and the twain were well matched. There is a saying that when two devils come together, hell is to pay. This is to be expected, and this certainly was to be expected when Bâtard and Black Leclère came together. The first time they met, Bâtard was a part-grown puppy, lean and hungry, with bitter eyes; and they met with snap and snarl, and wicked looks, for Leclère's upper lip had a wolfish way of lifting and showing the white, cruel teeth. And it lifted then, and his eyes glinted viciously, as he reached for Bâtard and dragged him out from the squirming litter. It was certain that they divined each other, for on the instant Bâtard had buried his puppy fangs in Leclère's hand, and Leclère, thumb and finger, was coolly choking his young life out of him.

"*Sacredam*,"¹ the Frenchman said softly, flirting the quick blood from his bitten hand and gazing down on the little puppy choking and gasping in the snow.

1 See CW 62, note 1.

Leclère turned to John Hamlin, storekeeper of the Sixty Mile Post.¹ “Dat fo’ w’at Ah lak heem. ’Ow moch, eh, you, *M’sieu*”? ’Ow moch? Ah buy heem, now; Ah buy heem queek.”

And because he hated him with an exceeding bitter hate, Leclère bought Bâtard and gave him his shameful name. And for five years the twain adventured across the Northland, from St. Michael’s and the Yukon Delta to the head-reaches of the Pelly and even so far as the Peace River, Athabasca, and the Great Slave.² And they acquired a reputation for uncompromising wickedness, the like of which never before attached itself to man and dog.

Bâtard did not know his father,—hence his name,—but, as John Hamlin knew, his father was a great gray timber-wolf. But the mother of Bâtard, as he dimly remembered her, was snarling, bickering, obscene³ husky, full-fronted and heavy-chested, with a malign eye, a cat-like grip on life, and a genius for trickery and evil. There was neither faith nor trust in her. Her treachery alone could be relied upon, and her wild-wood amours attested her general depravity.⁴ Much of evil and much of strength were there in these, Bâtard’s progenitors, and, bone and flesh of their bone and flesh, he had inherited it all. And then came Black Leclère, to lay his heavy hand on the bit of pulsating puppy life, to press and prod and mould till it became a big bristling beast, acute in knavery, overspilling with hate, sinister, malignant, diabolical. With a proper master Bâtard might have made an ordinary, fairly efficient sled-dog. He never got the chance: Leclère but confirmed him in his congenital iniquity.

The history of Bâtard and Leclère is a history of war—of five cruel, relentless years, of which their first meeting is fit summary. To begin with, it was Leclère’s fault, for he hated with understanding and intelligence, while the long-legged, ungainly puppy hated only blindly, instinctively, without reason or method. At first there were no refinements of cruelty (these were to come later), but simple beatings and crude brutalities. In one of these Bâtard had an ear injured. He never

1 A trading post on the Sixty Mile River (see *CW* 79, note 6).

2 St. Michael’s (now St. Michael) is a port settlement on Norton Sound, western Alaska, founded in 1833 as a trading post by the Russian-American Company; the Yukon Delta in western Alaska is where the Yukon River empties into the Bering Sea; the Pelly River, whose headwaters are west of the Mackenzie Mountains, is a tributary of the Yukon River, joining it at (now abandoned) Fort Selkirk; the Peace River originates in northern BC and flows into Slave River near Lake Athabasca, northeastern Alberta; Great Slave Lake is in the NWT.

3 In the magazine version, “obscene” is omitted.

4 In the magazine version, this sentence is omitted.

regained control of the riven¹ muscles, and ever after the ear drooped limply down to keep keen the memory of his tormentor. And he never forgot.

His puppyhood was a period of foolish rebellion. He was always worsted, but he fought back because it was his nature to fight back. And he was unconquerable. Yelping shrilly from the pain of lash and club, he none the less contrived always to throw in the defiant snarl, the bitter vindictive menace of his soul which fetched without fail more blows and beatings. But his was his mother's tenacious grip on life. Nothing could kill him. He flourished under misfortune, grew fat with famine, and out of his terrible struggle for life developed a preternatural intelligence. His were the stealth and cunning of the husky, his mother, and the fierceness and valor of the wolf, his father.

Possibly it was because of his father that he never wailed. His puppy yelps passed with his lanky legs, so that he became grim and taciturn, quick to strike, slow to warn. He answered curse with snarl, and blow with snap, grinning the while his implacable hatred; but never again, under the extremest agony, did Leclère bring from him the cry of fear nor of pain. This unconquerableness but fanned Leclère's wrath and stirred him to greater deviltries.

Did Leclère give Bâtard half a fish and to his mates whole ones, Bâtard went forth to rob other dogs of their fish. Also he robbed cachés and expressed himself in a thousand rogueries, till he became a terror to all dogs and masters of dogs. Did Leclère beat Bâtard and fondle Babette,—Babette who was not half the worker he was,—why, Bâtard threw her down in the snow and broke her hind leg in his heavy jaws, so that Leclère was forced to shoot her. Likewise, in bloody battles, Bâtard mastered all his team-mates, set them the law of trail and forage, and made them live to the law he set. In five years he heard but one kind word, received but one soft stroke of a hand, and then he did not know what manner of things they were. He leaped like the untamed thing he was, and his jaws were together in a flash. It was the missionary at Sunrise,² a newcomer in the country, who spoke the kind word and gave the soft stroke of the hand. And for six months after, he wrote no letters home to the States, and the surgeon at McQuestion³ travelled two hundred miles⁴ on the ice to save him from blood-poisoning.

Men and dogs looked askance at Bâtard when he drifted into their camps and posts. The men greeted him with feet threateningly lifted

1 Torn.

2 A fictional settlement on the Yukon River downstream from Dawson.

3 A settlement on the McQuestion River (see *CW* 117, note 1).

4 322 km.

for the kick, the dogs with bristling manes and bared fangs. Once a man did kick Bâtard, and Bâtard, with quick wolf snap, closed his jaws like a steel trap on the man's calf and crunched down to the bone. Whereat the man was determined to have his life, only Black Leclère, with ominous eyes and naked hunting-knife, stepped in between. The killing of Bâtard—ah, *sacredam*, that was a pleasure Leclère reserved for himself. Some day it would happen, or else—bah! who was to know? Anyway, the problem would be solved.

For they had become problems to each other. The very breath each drew was a challenge and a menace to the other. Their hate bound them together as love could never bind. Leclère was bent on the coming of the day when Bâtard should wilt in spirit and cringe and whimper at his feet. And Bâtard—Leclère knew what was in Bâtard's mind, and more than once had read it in Bâtard's eyes. And so clearly had he read, that when Bâtard was at his back, he made it a point to glance often over his shoulder.

Men marvelled when Leclère refused large money for the dog. "Some day you'll kill him and be out his price," said John Hamlin once, when Bâtard lay panting in the snow where Leclère had kicked him, and no one knew whether his ribs were broken, and no one dared look to see.

"Dat," said Leclère, dryly, "dat is my biz'ness, *M'sieu'*."

And the men marvelled that Bâtard did not run away. They did not understand. But Leclère understood. He was a man who lived much in the open, beyond the sound of human tongue, and he had learned the voices of wind and storm, the sigh of night, the whisper of dawn, the clash of day. In a dim way he could hear the green things growing, the running of the sap, the bursting of the bud. And he knew the subtle speech of the things that moved, of the rabbit in the snare, the moody raven beating the air with hollow wing, the baldface¹ shuffling under the moon, the wolf like a gray shadow gliding betwixt the twilight and the dark. And to him Bâtard spoke clear and direct. Full well he understood why Bâtard did not run away, and he looked more often over his shoulder.

When in anger, Bâtard was not nice to look upon, and more than once had he leaped for Leclère's throat, to be stretched quivering and senseless in the snow, by the butt of the ever ready dogwhip. And so Bâtard learned to bide his time. When he reached his full strength and prime of youth, he thought the time had come. He was broad-chested, powerfully muscled, of far more than ordinary size, and his neck from head to shoulders was a mass of bristling hair—to all appearances a full-blooded wolf. Leclère was lying asleep in his furs when Bâtard

1 A kind of grizzly bear: see London's story "Bald-Face" (1901).

deemed the time to be ripe. He crept upon him stealthily, head low to earth and lone ear laid back, with a feline softness of tread. Bâtard breathed gently, very gently, and not till he was close at hand did he raise his head. He paused for a moment, and looked at the bronzed bull throat, naked and knotty, and swelling to a deep and steady pulse. The slaver dripped down his fangs and slid off his tongue at the sight, and in that moment he remembered his drooping ear, his uncounted blows and prodigious wrongs, and without a sound sprang on the sleeping man.

Leclère awoke to the pang of the fangs in his throat, and, perfect animal that he was, he awoke clear-headed and with full comprehension. He closed on Bâtard's windpipe with both his hands, and rolled out of his furs to get his weight uppermost. But the thousands of Bâtard's ancestors had clung at the throats of unnumbered moose and caribou and dragged them down, and the wisdom of those ancestors was his. When Leclère's weight came on top of him, he drove his hind legs upward and in, and clawed down chest and abdomen, ripping and tearing through skin and muscle. And when he felt the man's body wince above him and lift, he worried and shook at the man's throat. His team-mates closed around in a snarling circle, and Bâtard, with failing breath and fading sense, knew that their jaws were hungry for him. But that did not matter—it was the man, the man above him, and he ripped and clawed, and shook and worried, to the last ounce of his strength. But Leclère choked him with both his hands, till Bâtard's chest heaved and writhed for the air denied, and his eyes glazed and set, and his jaws slowly loosened, and his tongue protruded black and swollen.

"Eh? *Bon*, you devil!" Leclère gurgled, mouth and throat clogged with his own blood, as he shoved the dizzy dog from him.

And then Leclère cursed the other dogs off as they fell upon Bâtard. They drew back into a wider circle, squatting alertly on their haunches and licking their chops, the hair on every neck bristling and erect.

Bâtard recovered quickly, and at sound of Leclère's voice, tottered to his feet and swayed weakly back and forth.

"A-h-ah! You beeg devil!" Leclère spluttered. "Ah fix you; Ah fix you plentee, by *Gar*?"

Bâtard, the air biting into his exhausted lungs like wine, flashed full into the man's face, his jaws missing and coming together with a metallic clip. They rolled over and over on the snow, Leclère striking madly with his fists. Then they separated, face to face, and circled back and forth before each other. Leclère could have drawn his knife. His rifle was at his feet. But the beast in him was up and raging. He would do the thing with his hands—and his teeth. Bâtard sprang in, but

Leclère knocked him over with a blow of the fist, fell upon him, and buried his teeth to the bone in the dog's shoulder.

It was a primordial setting and a primordial scene, such as might have been in the savage youth of the world. An open space in a dark forest, a ring of grinning wolf-dogs, and in the centre two beasts, locked in combat, snapping and snarling, raging madly about, panting, sobbing, cursing, straining, wild with passion, in a fury of murder, ripping and tearing and clawing in elemental brutishness.

But Leclère caught Bâtard behind the ear, with a blow from his fist, knocking him over, and, for the instant, stunning him. Then Leclère leaped upon him with his feet, and sprang up and down, striving to grind him into the earth. Both Bâtard's hind legs were broken ere Leclère ceased that he might catch breath.

"A-a-ah! A-a-ah!" he screamed, incapable of speech, shaking his fist, through sheer impotence of throat and larynx.

But Bâtard was indomitable. He lay there in a helpless welter,¹ his lip feebly lifting and writhing to the snarl he had not the strength to utter. Leclère kicked him, and the tired jaws closed on the ankle, but could not break the skin.

Then Leclère picked up the whip and proceeded almost to cut him to pieces, at each stroke of the lash crying: "Dis taim Ah break you! Eh? By *Gar!* Ah break you!"

In the end, exhausted, fainting from loss of blood, he crumpled up and fell by his victim, and when the wolf-dogs closed in to take their vengeance, with his last consciousness dragged his body on top Bâtard to shield him from their fangs.

This occurred not far from Sunrise, and the missionary, opening the door to Leclère a few hours later, was surprised to note the absence of Bâtard from the team. Nor did his surprise lessen when Leclère threw back the robes from the sled, gathered Bâtard into his arms, and staggered across the threshold. It happened that the surgeon of McQuestion, who was something of a gadabout, was up on a gossip, and between them they proceeded to repair Leclère.

"*Merci, non,*" said he. "Do you fix firs' de dog. To die? *Non.* Eet is not good. Becos' heem Ah mus' yet break. Dat fo' w'at he mus' not die."

The surgeon called it a marvel, the missionary a miracle, that Leclère pulled through at all; but so weakened was he, that in the spring the fever got him, and he went on his back again. Bâtard had been in even worse plight, but his grip on life prevailed, and the bones

1 Turmoil.

of his hind legs knit, and his organs righted themselves, during the several weeks he lay strapped to the floor. And by the time Leclère, finally convalescent, sallow and shaky, took the sun by the cabin door, Bâtard had reasserted his supremacy among his kind, and brought not only his own team-mates but the missionary's dogs into subjection.

He moved never a muscle, nor twitched a hair, when, for the first time, Leclère tottered out on the missionary's arm, and sank down slowly and with infinite caution on the three-legged stool.

"*Bon!*" he said. "*Bon!* De good sun!" And he stretched out his wasted hands and washed them in the warmth.

Then his gaze fell on the dog, and the old light blazed back in his eyes. He touched the missionary lightly on the arm. "*Mon père*, dat is one beeg devil, dat Bâtard. You will bring me one pistol, so, dat Ah drink de sun in peace."

And thenceforth for many days he sat in the sun before the cabin door. He never dozed, and the pistol lay always across his knees. Bâtard had a way, the first thing each day, of looking for the weapon in its wonted¹ place. At sight of it he would lift his lip faintly in token that he understood, and Leclère would lift his own lip in an answering grin. One day the missionary took note of the trick.

"Bless me!" he said. "I really believe the brute comprehends."

Leclère laughed softly. "Look you, *mon père*. Dat w'at Ah now spik, to dat does he lissen."

As if in confirmation, Bâtard just perceptibly wriggled his lone ear up to catch the sound.

"Ah say 'keel.'"

Bâtard growled deep down in his throat, the hair bristled along his neck, and every muscle went tense and expectant.

"Ah lift de gun, so, like dat." And suiting action to word, he sighted the pistol at Bâtard.

Bâtard, with a single leap, sideways, landed around the corner of the cabin out of sight.

"Bless me!" he repeated at intervals.

Leclère grinned proudly.

"But why does he not run away?"

The Frenchman's shoulders went up in the racial shrug that means all things from total ignorance to infinite understanding.

"Then why do you not kill him?"

Again the shoulders went up.

"*Mon père*," he said after a pause, "de taim is not yet. He is one beeg devil. Some taim Ah break heem, so, an' so, all to leetle bits. Hey? Some taim. *Bon!*"

1 Usual.

A day came when Leclère gathered his dogs together and floated down in a bateau¹ to Forty Mile and on to the Porcupine,² where he took a commission from the P.C. Company,³ and went exploring for the better part of a year. After that he poled up the Koyukuk to deserted Arctic City,⁴ and later came drifting back, from camp to camp, along the Yukon. And during the long months Bâtard was well lessoned. He learned many tortures, and, notably, the torture of hunger, the torture of thirst, the torture of fire, and, worst of all, the torture of music.

Like the rest of his kind, he did not enjoy music. It gave him exquisite anguish, racking him nerve by nerve, and ripping apart every fibre of his being. It made him howl, long and wolf-like, as when the wolves bay the stars on frosty nights. He could not help howling. It was his one weakness in the contest with Leclère, and it was his shame. Leclère, on the other hand, passionately loved music—as passionately as he loved strong drink. And when his soul clamored for expression, it usually uttered itself in one or the other of the two ways, and more usually in both ways. And when he had drunk, his brain a-lilt with unsung song and the devil in him aroused and rampant, his soul found its supreme utterance in torturing Bâtard.

“Now we will haf a leetle museek,” he would say. “Eh? W’at you t’ink, Bâtard?”

It was only an old and battered harmonica, tenderly treasured and patiently repaired; but it was the best that money could buy, and out of its silver reeds he drew weird, vagrant airs that men had never heard before. Then Bâtard, dumb of throat, with teeth tight clenched, would back away, inch by inch, to the farthest cabin corner. And Leclère, playing, playing, a stout club tucked under his arm, followed the animal up, inch by inch, step by step, till there was no further retreat.

At first Bâtard would crowd himself into the smallest possible space, grovelling close to the floor; but as the music came nearer and nearer, he was forced to uprear, his back jammed into the logs, his fore legs fanning the air as though to beat off the rippling waves of sound. He still kept his teeth together, but severe muscular contractions

1 “A light river boat; esp[ecially] the long tapering boats with flat bottoms used by the French Canadians” (*OED*).

2 The Porcupine River is the longest tributary of the Yukon River, joining it at Fort Yukon, northeastern Alaska.

3 The (San Francisco-based) Pacific Coast Steamship Company, the main shipping line on the US Pacific Coast from 1877 to 1916.

4 The Koyukuk River (as it is now spelled) is a tributary of the Yukon River in north-central Alaska; its middle fork was the site of a gold rush in 1898.

Arctic City was a mining settlement founded c. 1890 on the Koyukuk River.

attacked his body, strange twitchings and jerkings, till he was all a-quiver and writhing in silent torment. As he lost control, his jaws spasmodically wrenched apart, and deep throaty vibrations issued forth, too low in the register of sound for human ear to catch. And then, nostrils distended, eyes dilated, hair bristling in helpless rage, arose the long wolf howl. It came with a slurring rush upward, swelling to a great heart-breaking burst of sound, and dying away in sadly cadenced woe—then the next rush upward, octave upon octave; the bursting heart; and the infinite sorrow and misery, fainting, fading, falling, and dying slowly away.

It was fit for hell. And Leclère, with fiendish ken,¹ seemed to divine each particular nerve and heartstring, and with long wails and tremblings and sobbing minors to make it yield up its last shred of grief. It was frightful, and for twenty-four hours after, Bâtard was nervous and unstrung, starting at common sounds, tripping over his own shadow, but, withal,² vicious and masterful with his team-mates. Nor did he show signs of a breaking spirit. Rather did he grow more grim and taciturn, biding his time with an inscrutable patience that began to puzzle and weigh upon Leclère. The dog would lie in the firelight, motionless, for hours, gazing straight before him at Leclère, and hating him with his bitter eyes.

Often the man felt that he had bucked against the very essence of life—the unconquerable essence that swept the hawk down out of the sky like a feathered thunderbolt, that drove the great gray goose across the zones,³ that hurled the spawning salmon through two thousand miles⁴ of boiling Yukon flood. At such times he felt impelled to express his own unconquerable essence; and with strong drink, wild music and Bâtard, he indulged in vast orgies, wherein he pitted his puny strength in the face of things, and challenged all that was, and had been, and was yet to be.

“Dere is somet’ing dere,” he affirmed, when the rhythmized vagaries of his mind touched the secret chords of Bâtard’s being and brought forth the long lugubrious howl. “Ah pool eet out wid bot’ my han’s, so, an’ so. Ha! Ha! Eet is fonee! Eet is ver’ fonee! De priest chant, de womans pray, de mans swear, de leetle bird go *peep-peep*, Bâtard, heem go *yow-yow*—an’ eet is all de ver’ same t’ing. Ha! Ha!”

Father Gautier, a worthy priest, once reproved him with instances of concrete perdition. He never reproved him again.

1 Knowledge.

2 At the same time.

3 Major ecological divisions of the earth’s surface, e.g., Arctic and temperate, traversed by the grey goose during migration.

4 3,219 km.

"Eet may be so, *mon père*," he made answer. "An' Ah t'ink Ah go troo hell a-snappin', lak de hemlock troo de fire.¹ Eh, *mon père*?"

But all bad things come to an end as well as good, and so with Black Leclère. On the summer low water, in a poling boat, he left McDougall² for Sunrise. He left McDougall in company with Timothy Brown, and arrived at Sunrise by himself. Further, it was known that they had quarrelled just previous to pulling out; for the *Lizzie*, a wheezy ten-ton sternwheeler, twenty-four hours behind, beat Leclère in by three days. And when he did get in, it was with a clean-drilled bullet-hole through his shoulder muscle, and a tale of ambush and murder.

A strike had been made at Sunrise, and things had changed considerably. With the infusion of several hundred gold-seekers, a deal of whiskey, and half a dozen equipped gamblers, the missionary had seen the page of his years of labor with the Indians wiped clean. When the squaws became preoccupied with cooking beans and keeping the fire going for the wifeless miners, and the bucks with swapping their warm furs for black bottles and broken timepieces, he took to his bed, said "bless me" several times, and departed to his final accounting in a rough-hewn, oblong box. Whereupon the gamblers moved their roulette and faro tables into the mission house, and the click of chips and clink of glasses went up from dawn till dark and to dawn again.

Now Timothy Brown was well beloved among these adventurers of the north. The one thing against him was his quick temper and ready fist,—a little thing, for which his kind heart and forgiving hand more than atoned. On the other hand, there was nothing to atone for Black Leclère. He was "black," as more than one remembered deed bore witness, while he was as well hated as the other was beloved. So the men of Sunrise put an antiseptic dressing on his shoulder and haled him before Judge Lynch.³

It was a simple affair. He had quarrelled with Timothy Brown at McDougall. With Timothy Brown he had left McDougall. Without Timothy Brown he had arrived at Sunrise. Considered in the light of his evilness, the unanimous conclusion was that he had killed Timothy Brown. On the other hand, Leclère acknowledged their facts, but challenged their conclusion, and gave his own explanation. Twenty miles out of Sunrise he and Timothy Brown were poling the boat along the rocky shore. From that shore two rifle-shots rang out. Timothy Brown

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- 1 "And I think I'll go through hell snapping like a hemlock log on a fire"; a hemlock is a kind of hardy evergreen tree.
 - 2 A fictional settlement on the Yukon River downstream from Sunrise.
 - 3 An ironic allusion to lynch law: the "trial" was probably by miners' meeting (see *CW* 109, note 2).

pitched out of the boat and went down bubbling red, and that was the last of Timothy Brown. He, Leclère, pitched into the bottom of the boat with a stinging shoulder. He lay very quiet, peeping at the shore. After a time two Indians stuck up their heads and came out to the water's edge, carrying between them a birch-bark canoe. As they launched it, Leclère let fly. He potted one, who went over the side after the manner of Timothy Brown. The other dropped into the bottom of the canoe, and then canoe and poling boat went down the stream in a drifting battle. After that they hung up on a split current, and the canoe passed on one side of an island, the poling boat on the other. That was the last of the canoe, and he came on into Sunrise. Yes, from the way the Indian in the canoe jumped, he was sure he had potted him. That was all.

This explanation was not deemed adequate. They gave him ten hours' grace while the *Lizzie* steamed down to investigate. Ten hours later she came wheezing back to Sunrise. There had been nothing to investigate. No evidence had been found to back up his statements. They told him to make his will, for he possessed a fifty-thousand-dollar Sunrise claim,¹ and they were a law-abiding as well as a law-giving breed.

Leclère shrugged his shoulders. "Bot one t'ing," he said; "a leetle, w'at you call, favor—a leetle favor, dat is eet. I gif my feefty t'ousan' dollair to de church. I gif my husky dog, Bâtard, to de devil. De leetle favor? Firs' you hang heem, an' den you hang me. Eet is good, eh?"

Good it was, they agreed, that Hell's Spawn should break trail for his master across the last divide,² and the court was adjourned down to the river bank, where a big spruce tree stood by itself. Slackwater Charley put a hangman's knot in the end of a hauling-line, and the noose was slipped over Leclère's head and pulled tight around his neck. His hands were tied behind his back, and he was assisted to the top of a cracker box. Then the running end of the line was passed over an overhanging branch, drawn taut, and made fast. To kick the box out from under would leave him dancing on the air.

"Now for the dog," said Webster Shaw, sometime mining engineer. "You'll have to rope him, Slackwater."

Leclère grinned. Slackwater took a chew of tobacco, rove³ a running noose, and proceeded leisurely to coil a few turns in his hand. He paused once or twice to brush particularly offensive mosquitoes

1 He owned mining rights to a gold-bearing parcel of land at Sunrise worth \$50,000.

2 I.e., Bâtard should precede his master into the next life.

3 Past tense of "reeve," to pass a rope through or over something (here, to make a slipknot).

from off his face. Everybody was brushing mosquitoes, except Leclère, about whose head a small cloud was visible. Even Bâtard, lying full-stretched on the ground, with his fore paws rubbed the pests away from eyes and mouth.

But while Slackwater waited for Bâtard to lift his head, a faint call came down the quiet air, and a man was seen waving his arms and running across the flat from Sunrise. It was the storekeeper.

"C-call 'er off, boys," he panted, as he came in among them.

"Little Sandy and Bernadotte's jes' got in," he explained with returning breath. "Landed down below an' come up by the short cut. Got the Beaver with 'm. Picked 'm up in his canoe, stuck in a back channel, with a couple of bullet holes in 'm. Other buck was Klok-Kutz, the one that knocked spots out of his squaw and dusted."¹

"Eh? W'at Ah say? Eh?" Leclère cried exultantly. "Dat de one fo' sure! Ah know. Ah spik true."

"The thing to do is teach these damned Siwashes² a little manners," spoke Webster Shaw. "They're getting fat and sassy, and we'll have to bring them down a peg. Round in all the bucks and string up the Beaver for an object lesson. That's the programme. Come on and let's see what he's got to say for himself."

"Heh, M'sieu!" Leclère called, as the crowd began to melt away through the twilight in the direction of Sunrise. "Ah lak ver' moch to see de fon."

"Oh, we'll turn you loose when we come back," Webster Shaw shouted over his shoulder. "In the meantime meditate on your sins and the ways of providence. It will do you good, so be grateful."

As is the way with men who are accustomed to great hazards, whose nerves are healthy and trained to patience, so it was with Leclère, who settled himself to the long wait—which is to say that he reconciled his mind to it. There was no settling of the body, for the taut rope forced him to stand rigidly erect. The least relaxation of the leg muscles pressed the rough-fibred noose into his neck, while the upright position caused him much pain in his wounded shoulder. He projected his under lip and expelled his breath upward along his face to blow the mosquitoes away from his eyes. But the situation had its compensation. To be snatched from the maw of death was well worth a little bodily suffering, only it was unfortunate that he should miss the hanging of the Beaver.

And so he mused, till his eyes chanced to fall upon Bâtard, head between fore paws and stretched on the ground asleep. And then

1 "Beat his wife then fled."

2 See Appendix D2 (p. 151, note 1).

Leclère ceased to muse. He studied the animal closely, striving to sense if the sleep were real or feigned. Bâtard's sides were heaving regularly, but Leclère felt that the breath came and went a shade too quickly; also he felt that there was a vigilance or alertness to every hair that belied unshackling sleep.¹ He would have given his Sunrise claim to be assured that the dog was not awake, and once, when one of his joints cracked, he looked quickly and guiltily at Bâtard to see if he roused. He did not rouse then, but a few minutes later he got up slowly and lazily, stretched, and looked carefully about him.

"*Sacredam*," said Leclère, under his breath.

Assured that no one was in sight or hearing, Bâtard sat down, curled his upper lip almost into a smile, looked up at Leclère, and licked his chops.

"Ah see my feenish," the man said, and laughed sardonically aloud.

Bâtard came nearer, the useless ear wabbling, the good ear cocked forward with devilish comprehension. He thrust his head on one side quizzically, and advanced with mincing, playful steps. He rubbed his body gently against the box till it shook and shook again. Leclère teetered carefully to maintain his equilibrium.

"Bâtard," he said calmly, "look out. Ah keel you."

Bâtard snarled at the word, and shook the box with greater force. Then he upreared, and with his fore paws threw his weight against it higher up. Leclère kicked out with one foot, but the rope bit into his neck and checked so abruptly as nearly to overbalance him.

"Hi, ya! *Chook! Mush-on!*"² he screamed.

Bâtard retreated, for twenty feet³ or so, with a fiendish levity in his bearing that Leclère could not mistake. He remembered the dog often breaking the scum of ice on the water hole, by lifting up and throwing his weight upon it; and, remembering, he understood what he now had in mind. Bâtard faced about and paused. He showed his white teeth in a grin, which Leclère answered; and then hurled his body through the air, in full charge, straight for the box.

Fifteen minutes later, Slackwater Charley and Webster Shaw, returning, caught a glimpse of a ghostly pendulum swinging back and forth in the dim light. As they hurriedly drew in closer, they made out the man's inert body, and a live thing that clung to it, and shook and worried, and gave to it the swaying motion.

"Hi, ya! *Chook!* you Spawn of Hell!" yelled Webster Shaw.

But Bâtard glared at him, and snarled threateningly, without

1 That did not suggest a relaxed state of sleep.

2 See *CW* 65, note 2.

3 6 m.

loosing his jaws. Slackwater Charley got out his revolver, but his hand was shaking, as with a chill, and he fumbled.

“Here, you take it,” he said, passing the weapon over.

Webster Shaw laughed shortly, drew a sight between the gleaming eyes, and pressed the trigger. Bâtard’s body twitched with the shock, thrashed the ground spasmodically for a moment, and went suddenly limp. But his teeth still held fast locked.

Appendix G: Extracts from London's Correspondence (1902–1916)

1. From Letter to Cloudesley Johns, 6 January 1902

[A Californian, Johns (1874–1948) was an aspiring writer who since February 1899 had been one of Jack London's most frequent correspondents.]

I have at last discovered what I am. I am a materialistic monist,¹ and there's dam little satisfaction in it.

I am at work on a short story that no self-respecting bourgeois magazine will ever have anything to do with.² In conception it is really one of your stories. It's a crackerjack. (*L* 1:270)

2. From Letter to Anna Strunsky, 11 February 1902

[With Strunsky, London had been co-writing *The Kempton-Wace Letters* since 1900, and for some of this time the pair had been conducting an unsatisfactory romantic dalliance. (London had married Bessie Maddern in April 1900.) London's phrase "primordial beast" suggests his identification with Buck (see *CW* 71).]

But why go on? Am I bending to convention by baring my soul? I only wax heated anyway. The primordial beast lifts up its head and roars—of what good?—ten thousand generations seem to separate us. And anyway, though you may point the way to the New Jerusalem, I shall build the road thereto. (*L* 1:281)

3. From Letter to George P. Brett, 28 April 1902

[George P(latt) Brett, Sr. (1859–1936) was the British-born president of the New York branch of Macmillan, with whom London had contracted to publish his collection of Klondike tales *Children of the Frost* (1902). For most of the rest of London's life, the dependable Brett would remain his publisher and mentor.]

1 I.e., he does not accept natural plus supernatural (i.e., dualistic) explanations for phenomena (see Haeckel 1:35).

2 Probably "Bâtard" (see *L* 1:271, note 1).

I do not know whether *Children of the Frost* is an advance over previous work, but I do know that there are big books in me and that when I find myself they will come out. At present I am just trying to find myself and am busy gripping hold of life. (*L* 1:291)

4. From Letter to George P. Brett, 21 November 1902

I have done a great deal of studying and a great deal of thinking in the last two years, and I am confident that I can to-day write something worth while.... (*L* 1:318)

Once I am in a position, where I do not have to depend upon each day's work to keep the pot boiling for the next day, where I do not have to dissipate my energy on all kinds of hack, where I can slowly and deliberately ponder and shape the best that is in me, then, at that time, I am confident that I shall do big work.... (*L* 1:320)

I believe, now, that the first period of my career has been completed, and that I am about to enter a second period. And on the publishing side of this second period, I think I shall be able to avoid the errors into which I previously blundered. (*L* 1:321)

5. From Letter to Anna Strunsky, 20 December 1902

[M]ine is not *realism* but is *idealized realism*; ... artistically I am an emotional materialist. (*L* 1:329; italics in original)

6. From Letter to Anna Strunsky, 7 January 1903

Say, don't tell Wilshire¹ that I received \$2000 cash for rights in dog story. (*L* 1:335)

7. From Letter to George P. Brett, 12 February 1903

By the way, you remember you found me at work on a story when you visited me. This story I had begun immediately on my return from England & before my contract with you was signed. It is large enough to make a book, and of course I shall want you to bring it out some day if it should prove available.

I have just received word from the *Saturday Evening Post*.... They have virtually accepted it for serial publication, and we are now discussing the price for American serial rights. They also expect to cut it

1 H. Gaylord Wilshire (1861–1927), socialist publisher of *Wilshire's Magazine* (1901–15).

down some few thousand words.¹ Watt & Son are handling English serial rights.

It is an animal story, utterly different in subject & treatment from the rest of the animal stories which have been so successful; and yet it seems popular enough for the *Saturday Evening Post*, for they snapped it up right away. They were the first people I offered it to.

Now, to the point. With the money I shall receive from the serial publication of this story, the title of which is *The Call of the Wild*, I expect to do two things. (1), Pay off some of my debts. (2)—Take what is left, engage cabin passage in a sailing vessel for the South Seas, take a typewriter, plenty of paper & ink, and the plot for my sea story² along.... (L 1:342-43)

8. From Letter to George P. Brett, 25 February 1903

According to your suggestion, I am expressing you to-day the complete manuscript of *The Call of the Wild*. As you will see, it is somewhat different from anything I have yet done.

It has to be set up and copyrighted one time or another, and to avoid a possible hitch in simultaneous serial publication, of course now is the best time of all.... (L 1:345-46)

9. From Letter to George P. Brett, 10 March 1903

I am glad you like the *Call of the Wild*; but, unfortunately, I cannot accept your offer for all rights in it. You see, the *Saturday Evening Post* bought the American serial rights of it, and already have sent me over half of the proof-sheets....

The whole history of this story has been very rapid. On my return from England I sat down to write it into a 4000 word yarn, but it got away from me & I was forced to expand it to its present length. I was working on it when you came to see me in January. At the time I had made up my mind to let you carry the uncompleted duplicate away with you; but somehow the conversation did not lead up to it & I became diffident. Then I sent a copy to the *Saturday Evening Post* and they at once accepted it.

They have paid me three cents a word for the American serial rights....

I did not like the title, *The Call of the Wild*, and neither did the *Saturday Evening Post*. I racked my brains for a better title, & suggested

1 Later in February London received \$750 from the *Saturday Evening Post* for serialization rights to *The Call of the Wild*, with the text reduced to 27,000 words.

2 *The Sea-Wolf*.

The Sleeping Wolf.¹ They, however, if in the meantime they do not hit upon a better title, are going to publish it in the *Post* under *The Wolf*. This I do not like so well as *The Sleeping Wolf*, which I do not like very much either. There is a good title somewhere, if we can only lay hold of it.

The *Saturday Evening Post*, as first buyer, reserved the right of setting date for simultaneous serial publication in England & America, so they would be the ones to write to in this connection. Of course, they will illustrate it.²

I should have been glad to close with your offer ... but, as I have explained, the serial right has passed out of my hands. As a book, however, under the circumstances as they are, you may succeed in getting a fair sale out of it. (*L* 1:351)

10. From Letter to Anna Strunsky, 13 March 1903

You found [Brett] reading the manuscript of what was probably my dog story. I started it as a companion to my other dog story "Batard," [*sic*] which you may remember; but it got away from me, & instead of 4000 words it ran 32000 before I could call halt. I hope you will like it when it appears. (*L* 1:352)

11. From Letter to George P. Brett, 25 March 1903

I have telegraphed you to-day accepting your offer for *The Call of the Wild*.

I had thought, previous to receiving this last letter from you, that my already having disposed of serial rights had knocked in the head whatever plan you had entertained for the publishing of the book. I cannot tell how glad I am to find that I was mistaken.

I am sure that pushing the book in the manner you mention will be of the utmost value to me, giving me, as you say, an audience for subsequent books. It is the audience already gathered, as I do hope you will gather in this case, that counts.

Concerning title, I must confess to a sneaking preference for *The Call of the Wild*. But, under any circumstance, I want the decision of the title to rest with you. You know the publishing end of it, and the market value of titles, as I could not dream to know.

1 London later used this title for the last chapter of *White Fang*.

2 The *Saturday Evening Post* serialization had nine illustrations by Goodwin and eight by Bull (see p. 180, note 2 below), many of which reappeared in the Macmillan first book edition.

You may send the contract along at your convenience for me to sign. And I cannot convey to you the greatness of my pleasure at knowing that the book has struck you favorably; for I feel, therefore, that it is an earnest of the work I hope to do for you when I find myself. And find myself I will, some day. (*L* 1:357–58)

12. From Letter to George P. Brett, 2 April 1903

I am sending you herewith signed contract for *Call of the Wild*.

I notice, on outside of paper book brought out for copyright purposes, that the title is printed *Call of the Wild*. To me this seems far less effective than *The Call of the Wild*. Somehow, the “The” seems to give it a different & more definite meaning. (*L* 1:359)

13. From Letter to George P. Brett, 10 April 1903

I am mailing you, under separate cover & registered, the corrected proofs of *The Call of the Wild*.

I have not added to it, or cut out from it; but merely contented myself with minor alterations.

I have searched in vain for appropriate legends¹ for the various chapters. I do not believe they exist. I have even tried to compose some myself, but not being a poet, have failed lamentably.

You will remember that the one legend I used, was placed at the beginning both of the first & last chapters. This I have cut out from the last chapter. Also, I have removed it from the head of the first chapter & placed it opposite on the blank Page.... I feel that it will be very appropriate in some otherwise vacant page previous to the beginning of the first chapter.²

Concerning the oaths. Inside the back cover I have given the pages & lines of the book wherein oaths occur. I have a feeling that some of the less vigorous one[s] (two or three at any rate), should remain. But I have been both loth & unable to tackle their elimination. This I leave to you, and you have my full permission to do whatever you please with all the oaths in the book—only, if possible, I pray you leave me two or three.³

Is it asking too much to have placed on inside title page, under my name: “Author of *The Son of the Wolf*, *The God of His Fathers*, *The Children of the Frost*”?

1 Epigraphs.

2 In the Macmillan first edition the epigraph appears at the head of the first chapter (15).

3 See *CW* 62, note 1.

If the *Sat. Eve. Post* illustrations are not used by you, I wish then to call especial attention of the artist to page 183, on which page he will find the portrait of Buck depicted in words.¹ (*L* 1:360)

14. From Letter to George P. Brett, 24 July 1903

Indeed, indeed you have made a beautiful little book of the dog story. Not only is it the first book of mine which has been adequately illustrated, but I think it is about the most beautiful of its kind I have ever seen. The color printing is the most satisfactory I have yet seen. The decorative scheme, too, seems most appropriate.

I have just finished getting off the 25 copies you sent me, to my various journalistic friends. I took the liberty of making each copy a presentation book on the idea that they would carry farther & to better advantage....

I should like to get possession of two or three of the original drawings for the book—say the frontispiece, or Francois, or Perrault, or To the Death, or—well, or any of them.² Will you let me know, please, how I may do this? By purchase? By writing to the artists who made them? Or how?

I am writing appreciation to the three men and addressing them under cover of your house. (*L* 1:375)

15. From Letter to George P. Brett, 10 August 1903

I do hope you'll make a strike on that dog story, for you have been such a help to me that I want to see you getting some adequate return. (*L* 1:378)

16. From Letter to George P. Brett, 15 August 1903

I have just seen copies of the second edition of *The Call of the Wild*. I like the new cover immensely.³ You have improved splendidly on an already splendid book.... I notice that all the reviews speak highly of the get-up of the book. I do hope you will get a good return for all the labor and trouble you have taken with it. (*L* 1:379)

1 See *CW* 114.

2 The illustrators of the Macmillan edition were Philip R. Goodwin (1882–1935) (who depicted François, Perrault, and the fight to the death between Buck and Spitz), Charles Livingston Bull (1874–1932) (who drew the frontispiece), and Charles Edward Hooper.

3 For differences between the bindings of the early printings, see Woodbridge 40.

17. From Letter to Merle Maddern, 28 August 1903

[Maddern was Bessie London's niece.]

No, I had not thought of the ending you suggest. It might do, but I doubt. You see, he could sing only the *song* of the wild, not the *call* of the wild. There is a distinction. The song of the wild was the call to him, but he could not very well sing his own call.

I am so glad you liked the story.

The only reason I named him Buck was that years before I had filed away among my notes as appropriate dog names, "Buck & Bright." I had thought of using them some time on a pair of dogs.¹ But when I looked over my list of dog-names for a good one for my hero, I chose Buck—I guess because it was stronger than Bright.

We know little or nothing about what dogs think. But then we may conclude from their actions what their mental processes might be, and such conclusions may be within the range of possibility. (*L* 1:381)

18. From Letter to Marshall Bond, 17 December 1903

[London had become friends with Bond (1867–1941) and his brother Louis in Dawson City in October 1897. Bond's father was Judge Hiram G. Bond, owner of the ranch in Santa Clara that London visited, probably on several occasions, after his return from the Klondike and which served as the model for Judge Miller's place in the first chapter of *The Call of the Wild*.]

Yes, Buck was based upon your dog at Dawson. And of course Judge Miller's place was Judge Bond's—even to the cement swimming tank & the artesian well. And don't you remember that your father was attending a meeting of the Fruitgrowers Association the night I visited you,² and Louis was organizing an athletic club—all of which events figured with Buck if I remember correctly. (*L* 1:399)

19. From Letter to George P. Brett, 5 December 1904

[London repeated the idea below, which would eventually be realized in *White Fang*, in a letter to Charmian Kittredge (*L* 1:455) written around the same time.]

1 London had already used these names for a pair of inside wolf-dogs that briefly appear in his story "Jan, the Unrepentant" (1900).

2 This occasion may have been in mid-October 1901 (see Dyer 109).

I have the idea for the next book I shall write

Not a sequel to *Call of the Wild*

But a companion to “ “ “ “

I'm going to reverse the process.

Instead of the devolution or decivilization of a dog, I'm going to give the evolution, the civilization of a dog.—development of domesticity, faithfulness, love, morality, & all the amenities & virtues. (*L* 1:454–55)

20. From Letter to John M. O'Hara, 25 July 1907

[For O'Hara and his poem, see Appendix E5.]

I ran across those lines from your poem “Atavism,” in a detached fragment. Never knew who wrote them, and never knew the rest of the poem. Won't you PLEASE send me the whole poem?¹ Of all the poetry I know, there were no four lines within a hundred million miles as appropriate for the key to *The Call of the Wild* as were those four lines of yours that I used. (*L* 2:701)

21. From Letter to Karl E. Harriman, 12 December 1910

[Harriman was editor of the magazine *Red Book*. In his letter to George P. Brett of 29 December 1910 (*L* 2:964), London repeated this anecdote, which he used to demonstrate how editors cannot be trusted to adjudge book titles.]

The Saturday Evening Post wrote me telling me that [*The Call of the Wild*] was a dandy story, but that the title was rotten. I told them that it was the best title I could think of, and if they wanted to change it they'd have to make up one themselves. Behold! When The Macmillan Co. was in the process of publishing the book, they sent me a letter telling me that the story was dandy but that the title was rotten. I told them what I told *The Sat. Eve. Post*. Failing to find a title they liked better, they actually published the book under the title of *The Call of the Wild*. And the title was a ten-strike. It has become a phrase in the English language. (*L* 2:954)

1 O'Hara evidently complied with the request, as in a letter of 12 September 1907 London asked Ninette Eames to put a manuscript copy of O'Hara's poem into his personal copy of *The Call of the Wild* (*L* 2:709).

22. From Letter to Edgar G. Sisson, 30 January 1915

[Sisson was managing editor of *Collier's* magazine. The “dog books” are the posthumously published novels *Jerry of the Islands* and *Michael, Brother of Jerry* (both 1917).]

You know what kind of a dog writer I am. Remember *Call of Wild* and *White Fang* were both serial successes as well as big book successes. I have two crackerjack dog books [I] want to start writing right away.... Each will be about seventy thousand words and they are bound to make a hit with my dog public which is the biggest public I have. The announcement of a dog serial by me should fetch subscribers. (L 3:1419)

23. From Letter to Frank A. Garbutt, 5 February 1915

[Garbutt was an organizer of Paramount Pictures. *The Call of the Wild*, which had been produced by D.W. Griffith as a 16-minute silent film in 1908, would not be filmed again till 1923.]

I have talked with professional dog men from Alaska who contend that it is most possible to make a fine moving picture of *The Call of the Wild*. Now I do not want to brag yet I am compelled to tell you that *The Call of the Wild* needs no advertising whatever. It is not a novel nor is it any sort of a story in its classification at the present time. It is a text book, and a classic. It earns for its publishers hundreds of thousands of dollars and I sold it outright for \$2000.00—wherefore I am not bragging about what it earns me but am bragging upon its popularity. Go out anywhere in Los Angeles in the next twenty-four hours and ask children from the age of eight to the age of twenty what they know about *The Call of the Wild*. You will find that they all know it. (L 3:1423)

24. From Letter to H.E. Kelsey, 3 April 1915

[Kelsey was a Hawaii-based acquaintance of Jack London.]

My *Call of the Wild* and my *White Fang* have both exploited love in its widest evolutionary significance—one showing what happens in the absence of love; one showing what glorious things can happen with the presence of love. (L 3:1439)

25. From Letter to Loen Weilskov, 16 October 1916

[Weilskov was a Danish fan of Jack London. *The Game* (1905) is London's tragic novella about a boxer.]

I like certain of my books for different reasons, and probably have no favorite above all the rest. *The Game* is a particular pet of mine. I like *White Fang* better than I do *The Call of the Wild*. (L 3:1590)

Appendix H: Reviews of *The Call of the Wild*

1. From Anon., "Story of a Dog: Jack London's Newest Book, *The Call of the Wild*," *New York Times Saturday Review of Books and Art* (25 July 1903): 512

Mr. Jack London, having made us acquainted in his previous stories with the people of the Far Northwest, proceeds in his latest and best book, *The Call of the Wild*, to introduce us to a little lower stratum of the same society—a most fascinating company of dogs, good, bad, and indifferent, of which a huge fellow, St. Bernard and collie crossed, named Buck is the bright particular star.

Unlike most stories of the kind, men and women occupy a very unimportant place in this one, and not much time or trouble is taken by the author in individualizing the few humans who are necessary to carry on the action. Better still, Mr. London's dogs are not merely people masquerading in canine skins. At least this is true to a far greater extent than has usually been the case even with the best dogs of fiction; and during the delightful hour it takes to read this story one feels that he is really in a world in which dog standards, dog motives, and dog feelings are the subject of analysis, and that Mr. London has somehow penetrated a step or two behind the barrier which often seems so slight and transparent between man and "man's best friend." (512)

2. From Anon., "Books of the Week," *Outlook* 74 (25 July 1903): 762

This is a fine dog-story, but it is a great deal more than that.... Mr. London shows us, with a cold, clear vigorousness that suits the subject, the life of the Far North. One feels that around Buck is passing a wild, hard, thrilling strife for existence, for food, and for gold. The human figures are strongly drawn; and although there is no love tale in the book, its romance is fascinating. In point of execution this story seems to us the best that Mr. London has put forth. It takes hold of the attention irresistibly, and keeps that hold to the end. A word of special praise should be accorded the original and effective color illustration. (762)

3. From George Hamlin Fitch, "New Books," *San Francisco Chronicle* (2 August 1903): 32

[Fitch (1852–1925) was the chief literary critic of the *Chronicle*, then the largest newspaper on the west coast.]

When Jack London, four years ago, wrote the stories that were gathered in *The Son of the Wolf* all the critics recognized in him a master of the life of the Arctic, as all, a decade before, had acclaimed Kipling the master of the older and more complex life of India. There was no question of London's intimate, first-hand knowledge of the trail under the midnight sun and of the fierce lust for gold that arouses in the miner the passions of the cave man of the stone age. This knowledge was stamped on every line. With it was joined a marvelous story-telling faculty that gripped the reader's interest and never let go until the end was reached. With it, too, went a purely pagan joy in living and fighting, and overcoming the obstacles that nature in the Far North throws in the way of man. Stripped of all sentimentality, these stories lay hold upon one like the tales told by one who comes out from the very presence of dreadful death and in whose eyes yet linger the glow of superb courage. Other stories Jack London has told in the meanwhile, but he never reached the height of those first tales until he produced *The Call of the Wild*, which the Macmillan Company of New York bring out now in fine style, with a number of illustrations by Philip R. Goodwin and Charles Livingston Bull. It is the story of a dog's life in the Far North, but this record of a splendid canine hero is really a marvelously graphic picture of the great gold rush to the Klondike in 1897, and of the life of the packer and the miner in Alaska. Compared with this all other stories or sketches of this second great gold rush of the nineteenth century pale into insignificance. Fierce, brutal, splashed with blood, and alive with the crack of whip and blow of club, it is yet a story that sounds the deep note of tenderness between man and beast, and that loyalty and fidelity which never falters even in the jaws of death. And beyond all this is the strange haunting charm of "the call of the wild" to the savage strain in the big dog, arousing dormant instincts that have come down to him from his wolf ancestors. At times this is pushed perilously far, but in nothing has Jack London shown more clearly his artistic mastery than in making real to the reader the hereditary instincts that the savage life of the north brings out in the great dog, the hero of his story. Only once is a false note struck, and that is at the end, when he makes the dog return every year to mourn over the grave of the master whom he loved....

It would be idle to recommend this book to any one who wishes love or sentiment. It is a man's book, through and through, but any one fond of dogs or of life and adventure in the Far North will be glad to read the book, and to read it more than once. In nothing else that Jack London has written has he shown so clearly as in this his complete mastery of his material and that unconscious molding of style to thought which marks real from make-believe literature. (32)

4. From Anon., "Literary Notes: Jack London at His Best,"
Argonaut 53 (3 August 1903): 72

[The *Argonaut* was a San Francisco-based weekly newspaper founded in 1876.]

Rudyard Kipling is preëminently the poet of steam and the machine.... Before him no poet wove the cable, the telegraph, the locomotive into a love-poem of power and beauty, nor before him did levers and cranks, cogs and wheels, figure in the vocabulary of romance. Kipling is the most modern of literary moderns. He is in harmony with the spirit of the age.

And if steam and the machine have worked a tremendous revolution in material things during the half-century past, the doctrine of evolution has worked a greater one in traditions and beliefs. Kipling is the poet of the one, and—without flattery we say it—Jack London has irrefragably established his title as the prose poet of the other. In his former stories of the North, in the *Kempton-Wace Letters*, but more than all, in his last and best book, *The Call of the Wild*, he has touched the dry bones of a scientific theory with imagination and made them live. Romance? Here is the new romance. William Morris sought romance in mediaevalism.¹ Many another has sought it there. In the background of their books loomed vague and misty the Olympian gods. Romance bore upon its shoulders the burden of dead beliefs and outworn creeds. But *The Call of the Wild* belongs to a new dispensation. The poetry that is in it is the poetry of the living world's real, not its imagined, history. To Mr. London the Trojan War, the wanderings of Ulysses, the westward journeyings of Aeneas² are not half so stirring, so epic, as primitive man's struggle for existence against huge and hairy mammals in an age of ice.

1 The British writer, designer, and socialist (1834–96) who drew much of his inspiration from medieval romance.

2 Allusions to the three best-known classical epic poems: Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (both c. 8th century BCE), and Virgil's *Aeneid* (1st century BCE).

That evolution plays such a part in *The Call of the Wild* does not mean that the theory has run away with the story. The tale of a noble dog ... is told with fine imagination and poetic power. Like Kipling's stories, again, it will appeal alike to those who read merely "for the story," and to those whose interest is in its broader aspects. This is Mr. London's strongest and most virile work—thus far. (72)

5. From Mary Calkins Brooke, "The Call of the Wild," [San Francisco] *Bulletin* (23 August 1903): 6

It was very clever and deft of Mr. London to make his hero only a dog. In the rush for gold plenty of men and some women suffered as much, grew as strong, became, perhaps, as wolfish and barbaric—if not outwardly, yet after all in hidden attributes of cruelty and greed. *The Call of the Wild* is heard as well by human ears, and if one would, one could easily enough read Mr. London's account of Buck's life and degeneration as an allegory illustrating the danger to humanity of the fierce war for wealth that has been waged in Alaska ever since the world learned that vast stores of gold were waiting in the north for men hardy enough, wolfish enough, cruel enough, relentless enough to wrest it at all hazards from the unwilling earth and from the still more reluctant hands of other men, who, struggling as they, were not yet conscienceless enough or relentless enough to hold what had cost them so dear. Accepting it more simply, *The Call of the Wild* is a wonderful dog story—an animal story possible only in such extraordinary conditions as have prevailed in Alaska during the past decade. (6)

6. From Anon., "The Call of the Wild," *Athenaeum* 3957 (29 August 1903): 279

[This issue of the distinguished weekly *Athenaeum*, based in London, England, also contains an advertisement for the six-shilling Heinemann edition of *The Call of the Wild*, with enthusiastic blurbs from major British periodicals and newspapers: *Spectator*, *Academy*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Chronicle*, *Daily News*, *Daily Mail*, *St. James's Gazette*, and *Scotsman* (271).]

This book is published in London by Mr. Heinemann. It was apparently printed and electrotyped in America, and upon its first page is found the legend "The M.M. Co.," which bookbuyers are wont to associate with Messrs. Macmillan. Its get-up is good and tasteful, like that of many of the volumes that come from America; its score of illustrations are well reproduced, and paper and printing are all that can be desired. It is the best thing the public has had so far from the pen of a young author who,

though he made his first bow but yesterday, has already shown a fresh and vigorous bent in story, combined with a certain amount of originality and dramatic power. Hitherto his originality has smacked strongly of Kipling worship, but in the present volume, though it is from beginning to end the story of an animal, we have no hint of the *Jungle Books* or of any sort of derivativeness. Consequently it is deserving of more serious consideration than its predecessors. (279)

7. From Anon, "Views and Reviews," *Comrade 2* (September 1903): 280-81

[The *Comrade* (1901-05) was a short-lived New York-based organ of the Socialist Party of America.]

Jack London has scored another well deserved success. His latest book, *The Call of the Wild*, is not only a powerful story: it is a real and important contribution of literature—the "things that abide." ...

What most impresses one in reading this book, especially if one has known and loved dogs, is the wonderful insight into the canine nature which Jack London shows. His dogs are real dogs, not mere pantomime dogs; not human actors clothed for stage purposes in dog skins. All his dogs, Spitz the villain no less than Buck the hero, have true dog qualities, and for most of them one soon begins to feel as much affection as ever one could feel for fictional human characters. Here lies London's marvellous power; he understands dogs and interprets in human speech what every lover of dogs has vaguely felt dogs must feel and know. I do not know of anything so good of its kind as this remarkable story. (280)

8. From Florence Jackson, "Current Books," *Overland Monthly* 42 (September 1903): 272

[In 1903 Florence Jackson was the editor of *Overland Monthly*, one of California's oldest and most respected periodicals.]

Whether in beast or human the keynote of effort, and reason for endurance, may be found in pride. An incentive as powerful as the instinct for self-preservation, success is proportionate to its strength. This is one of the claims made by Jack London in the thrillingly touching story of a dog's life, which is told in *The Call of the Wild*, a book of great power and of intense interest....

And yet—fortunate it is that there can be a yet—the terrible lesson the book would seem to give of the inevitableness of primitive conditions making savage even what has been trained civilization, is not

properly balanced. Nothing in the story is made to show the growth out of primitive conditions, the conditions men and beasts were in at the beginning, from which they advanced. So if the primitive uncivilizes, from the primitive civilization awakes and the eternal round strikes for the universal a fair proportion. Some of the traits of the dog Buck, which are given as evident indication that his nature is harking back to his forebears of the wilds, are made unduly significant. For instance, the most petted and civilized of dogs will bay at the moon, but the call of the wild is made to appear that which wrings the midnight howl from Buck. The stress given to pride in man and beast is the truest note struck, and marks the strongest passages in the book.

It is strange that such a publisher as the house that brings out this volume should make use of the smaller economies of poorer book-makers. The unsightliness of pages of smooth paper inserted only to carry half-tones, and those but poor, is distressing. (272)

9. From J. Stewart Doubleday, “Reviews: The Call of the Wild,” *Reader 2* (September 1903): 408-09

The power of Jack London lies not alone in his clear-sighted depiction of life, but in his suggestion of the eternal principles that underlie it. The writer who can suggest these principles forcibly and well, though he may not be actually great, has something in him closely allied to greatness. Mr. London is one of the most original and impressive authors this country has known. His voice is large and vibrant, his manner straightforward and free, and we predict for him a success in Western narrative equalled only by that of Mr. Stewart Edward White.¹ ...

The philosophy of the survival of the fittest runs through every page of Mr. London's book; the call of the wild evidently signifies the appeal (and in Buck's case, the triumph) of barbarian life over civilized life.... The book, very brief, is filled from cover to cover with thrilling scenes; the Northern Territory is brought home to us with convincing vividness; every sentence is pregnant with original life; probably no such sympathetic, yet wholly unsentimental, story of a dog has ever found print before; the achievement may, without exaggeration, be termed “wonderful.”

Yet it is cruel reading—often relentless reading; we feel at times the blood lashing in our faces at what seems the continual maltreatment of a dumb animal; we can scarce endure the naked brutality of the thing; our sense of the creature's perplexity in suffering is almost absolutely unrelieved; we sicken of the analysis of the separate tortures of this dog's Arctic Inferno. Not seldom we incline to remonstrate,

1 The California-based author (1873–1946) of adventure travel books.

“Hang it, Jack London, what the deuce do you mean by ‘drawing’ on us so? But we forgive the writer at last because he is true! He is not sentimental, tricky; he is at harmony with himself and nature. He gives an irresistible groan sometimes—like Gorky;¹ but this is only because he does, after all, feel for humanity—yes, down to the bottom of his big California heart.

It must be patent to all, we think, that the man who can, through the simple story of a dog set us thought-wandering over illimitable ways, is a man of language to be respectfully classed and reckoned with. There is nothing local or narrow about Jack London. Sectionalism is smaller than he. His voice is the voice of a man in the presence of the multitude, and he utters the word that is as bread to him. He has not, to say truly, much humor; the theme of necessary toil and suffering overburdens and drowns the casual note of laughter—he is buoyant rather than bright. Sometimes we are wearied by his too ecstatic hymning of the primitive, the rude, the elemental in spirit and nature—we begin to desire a little more mildness and beauty, a possible mercy and femininity, a hope; but these we must look for in other writers than the stalwart youthful leader of the promising Far West. In his own field he is master; and more than this we ought not to exact of any man. (408–09)

10. From Anon., “Notable Books of the Day: An Epic of the Dog,” *Literary Digest* 27 (3 October 1903): 437

This story is a dog-epic, lacking the poetic form. Buck, the hero, is a cross between a St. Bernard and a Scotch shepherd, but he is a dog lifted by the imagination of Mr. London as high above ordinary dogs as Achilles is lifted above ordinary men....

Mr. London has made no pretence of writing a work of science, a treatise on natural history. It is a work of art, not of science. The details of the story are incredible; but when you read you care no more for that than you care for Homer’s incredible details,—such, for instance, as the one about Achilles’s heel. Mr. London has given us a piece of lasting literature, or we are much mistaken. (437)

11. From Anon., “Recent Fiction,” *Nation* 77 (8 October 1903): 286–87

The part of the story that narrates Buck’s life in the traces is especially graphic. The dogs and the drivers are sharply drawn, and the incidents

1 The Russian author Maxim Gorky (real name Alexei Maximov Peshkov, 1868–1936), famous, like Jack London, for his humble origin, proletarian sympathies and socialist activism.

of the trail are told with force. If the ferocity of the “husky dogs” is exaggerated, one may remember that there is no introduction asserting the story to be “strictly true,” and that, logically, Buck needed a fierce school in which to unlearn his gentler habits. The background of Arctic scenery is merely suggested; the author subordinates persons and scenes in order to tell his dog story with simple directness. He is least effective in the fanciful pages where Buck remembers the youth of his race and thrills to the call of the wilderness. The possibility of a dog’s retrogression is an interesting question. Given such an exceptional individual as Buck, and such surrounding conditions, one must hesitate wholly to deny it. Apropos of Buck’s excursion with the timber wolf, the present reviewer may say that he has known of somewhat similar intercourse between a dog and coyotes. (287)

12. From H.W. Boynton, “Books Old and New: ‘Effusions of Fancy,’” *Atlantic Monthly* 92 (November 1903): 693–98

[In May 1903 the journalist and critic Henry Walcott Boynton (1869–1947) had favourably reviewed Kipling’s *Just So Stories* in *Atlantic Monthly*.]

The Call of the Wild is a story altogether untouched by bookishness. A bookish writer might, beginning with the title, have called it *An Instance of Atavism*, or *A Reversion to Type*. A bookish reader might conceivably read it as a sort of allegory with a broad human application; but its face value as a single-minded study of animal nature really seems to be sufficiently considerable. The author, too, must be allowed to stand upon his own feet, though one understands why he should have been called the American Kipling. His work has dealt hitherto with primitive human nature; this is a study of primitive dog nature. No modern writer of fiction, unless it be Kipling, has preserved so clearly the distinction between animal virtue and human virtue. The farther Buck reverts from the artificial status of a man-bounded domestic creature to the natural condition of the “dominant primordial beast,” the more strongly (if unwillingly) we admire him. There is something magnificent in the spectacle of his gradual detachment from the tame, beaten-in virtues of uncounted forefathers, his increasing ability to hold his own among unwonted conditions, and his final triumph over the most dreaded powers of the wilderness....

The making and the achievement of such a hero constitute, not a pretty story at all, but a very powerful one. (695–96)

Appendix I: The Plagiarism Issue

1. From Egerton R. Young, *My Dogs in the Northland* (London: S.W. Partridge, 1902)

[Egerton Ryerson Young (1840–1909) was a Canadian missionary who spent eight years among the aboriginal peoples of the NWT, producing thereafter a number of popular non-fiction books about life in the Northland. The dog Rover referred to here was a Newfoundland.]

Rover, like all of my civilized dogs, had not the hard, firm, compact feet of the Huskies. Hence, for him and others, I had to be prepared to overcome this defect as far as possible.

Various expedients have been devised, but we found that the best plan was to have a large stock of dog-shoes with us on every trip. These shoes were made of a firmly woven warm woollen cloth called duffle. The shoes were shaped very much like a man's mitten without the thumb. They were of various sizes so as to fit snugly to the injured foot, whether large or small.

Some winters there would be comparatively few injuries or frozen feet among my dogs. Then perhaps the very next season, hardly a dog escaped. While as a general thing these injuries were confined to my imported dogs or their descendants, yet there were winters when almost every dog I owned suffered, and all vied with each other in calls for the comfortable woollen shoes to be put on their feet. (190)

We had some difficulty, at first, in making some of the more nervous or suspicious dogs understand that these shoes were for their good. There were those who would endeavour to tear them from their feet, and had to be watched and even punished for so doing. However, it was not long before even these, having found out the comfort there was in them, were now willing to resort to all sorts of schemes and expedients to induce us to put these comfortable shoes on their suffering feet.

Rover soon became an adept in asking for his shoes. He was not satisfied with them on the one or two feet that seemed to need them. He decidedly thought that "prevention was better than cure," and so he wanted shoes on all his feet, every day we were travelling on long journeys. It was interesting to see how he would wait until we were ready to harness up the dogs, then he would deliberately throw himself on his back, and putting up his feet, eloquently even if mutely, thus plead for his warm shoes. (193)

2. From Jack London, *The Call of the Wild* (New York: Macmillan, 1903)

Buck's feet were not so compact and hard as the feet of the huskies. His had softened during the many generations since the day his last wild ancestor was tamed by a cave-dweller or river man. All day long he limped in agony, and camp once made, lay down like a dead dog. Hungry as he was, he would not move to receive his ration of fish, which François had to bring to him. Also, the dog-driver rubbed Buck's feet for half an hour each night after supper, and sacrificed the tops of his own moccasins to make four moccasins for Buck. This was a great relief, and Buck caused even the weazened face of Perrault to twist itself into a grin one morning, when François forgot the moccasins and Buck lay on his back, his four feet waving appealingly in the air, and refused to budge without them. Later his feet grew hard to the trail, and the worn-out foot-gear was thrown away. (77)

3. From L.A.M. Bosworth and Jack London, "Is Jack London a Plagiarist?," *Independent* 62 (14 February 1907): 373-76

[This article contains (1) the *Independent* editor's note explaining that he had written to Jack London asking for his comments on the "interesting case of parallelism" (373) raised by Mrs. Bosworth; (2) Bosworth's short essay noting the "certain startling resemblances" (373) between *My Dogs in the Northland* and *The Call of the Wild*; and (3) London's letter of reply.]

[From Bosworth's essay]

In the year 1902 there appeared a book written by Egerton R. Young, a missionary to the Indians in the region of Lake Winnipeg, in the Dominion of Canada. Altho[ugh] put forth without any great pretensions of style, this simple true tale, *My Dogs in the Northland*, made a large place for itself among dog-lovers, while it was not without its dramatic situations and moments of intense interest for the general reader.

The month of July of the year 1903 was marked by the publication of another dog book. Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* may not fully justify the term "classic," which has been applied to it. Yet few books have attained the prompt and continued popularity of this strange work, with its three-fold appeal—to the love of animals, to a taste for entertaining literature, and to the universal appetite for romance—*plus* the subtle suggestion that there is in it more than a dog story, more than literature, more than the wild romance of the Klondike region.

But there are some peculiar things about a portion of the material

of *The Call of the Wild*. Placed beside *My Dogs in the Northland*, it shows certain startling resemblances to the latter book, marked similarities in the personnel of the leading dog characters, and in circumstances and situations, tho[ugh] far inferior to it in delineations of dog nature.

One can scarcely fail to see the likeness between the combined characteristics of Dr. Young's brave, strong, intelligent "Jack" and his "Rovers" I and II, and those of Jack London's "Buck." (373)

[Eleven juxtaposed passages from each work (including the ones in Appendices I1 and I2 above) follow, heavily edited to emphasize verbal parallels.]

[From London's letter of reply to the editor of the *Independent*]

By all means go ahead and publish that article that accuses me of plagiarism of many passages in *The Call of the Wild*. So far as concerns the source of much of my material in *The Call of the Wild* being Egerton R. Young's *My Dogs in the Northland*, I plead guilty. A couple of years ago, in the course of writing to Mr. Young, I mentioned the same fact, and thanked him for the use his book had been to me.

I wish, however, that you would get the writer of the said article to include in it a definition of what constitutes plagiarism.

Mr. Young's book ... was a narrative of fact, giving many interesting true details of his experiences with dogs in the Northland. Fiction-writers have always considered actual experiences of life to be a lawful field for exploitation—in fact, every historical novel is a sample of fictional exploitation of published narratives of fact.

Take an instance from the article accusing me of plagiarism, now in your hands—that of the dog that lay down on its back with its paws in the air and begged for moccasins. This happened to one of Mr. Young's dogs, and I exploited it in my story. But suppose that I am in the Klondike. Suppose this incident occurs with one of my dogs. I can utilize this material in a story, can I not? Agreed. Now suppose it doesn't happen with my dog, but with some one else's dog, but that I happen to see the incident. May I use it? Again agreed. Now, however, I do not see the incident, but the man with whose dog it occurred tells me about it. May I use it? Again agreed. A step further, instead of telling about it, a man writes the incident, not in a story, but in a plain narrative of incidents. May I use it in my story? And if not, why not? ...

And so it was with Mr. Young's *My Dogs in the Northland*. Really, to charge plagiarism in such a case is to misuse the English language. To be correct, "sources of materials used in *The Call of the Wild*" should be substituted for "Plagiarism." (375-76)

4. From Anon., “Against Jack London,” *New York Times Saturday Review of Books* (23 February 1907): 109

A charge of plagiarism has been brought against Jack London. This time *The Independent* voices it, and it is made by Mr. Egerton R. Young, who says that Jack London, in writing *The Call of the Wild*, borrowed from his book, *My Dogs in the Northland*.... In the same number of *The Independent* appears Jack London's answer. He does not deny that he has taken material from Mr. Young's book, but claims that the latter is a book of fact, and that hence, the question is not one of plagiarism, but of taking a story of fact as a basis for one of fiction, which, he maintains, is quite legitimate. (109)

5. From Egerton R. Young, letter, “My Dogs in the North Land,” dated 5 March 1907, in *New York Times Saturday Review of Books* (9 March 1907): 146

In your issue of Feb. 23 you have a paragraph entitled “Against Jack London,” in which you do me, what I am sure you did not intend, a great injustice, in that you charge me with having brought a charge of plagiarism against Jack London.

I absolutely knew nothing of the article in *The Independent* until a copy of it was sent to me.

Although I am the author of the book *My Dogs in the North Land* [*sic*], from which Jack London has borrowed so largely, I never had any request from that gentleman for permission to use any portion of it, nor have I ever had any letter directly or indirectly or communication in any shape or form that would justify Jack London in writing as he does in his published letter in *The Independent*, where he says, “A couple of years ago, in the course of writing to Mr. Young, I mentioned the same fact, and thanked him for the use his book had been to me.”

No letter with “thanks” ever reached me. (146)

6. From Jack London, letter to Egerton R. Young (18 March 1907)

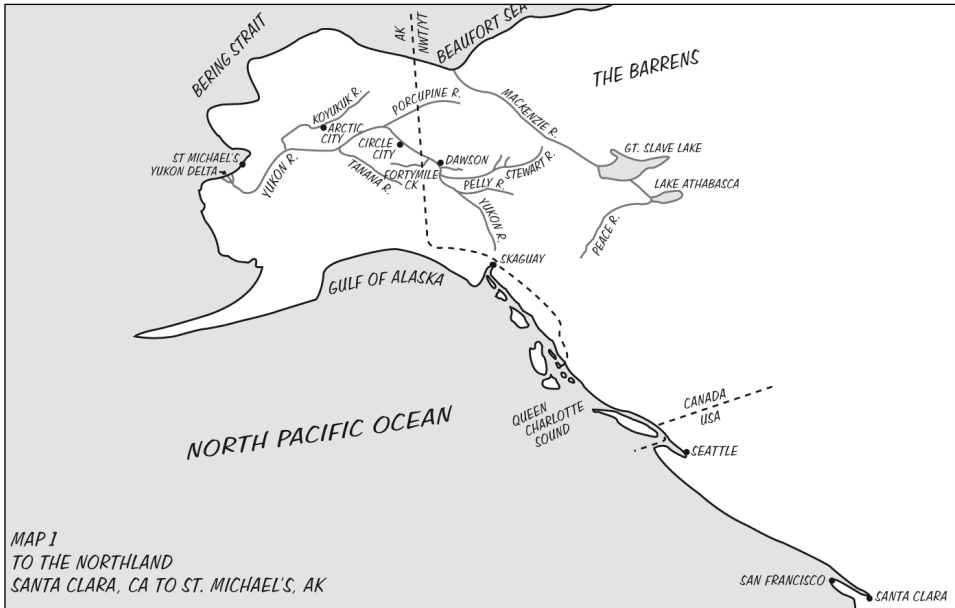
I have just read in the *New York Times*, your communication of March 5, and I must confess that your unqualified denial of having received a letter from me took me pretty well aback. I have been racking my brain for a more definite memory of the occurrence, and I believe that I now have it quite clear. A year or so ago ... I received a copy of your latest book.... [T]his book was the autobiography, if I remember

rightly, of a dog.¹ This book was sent to me by your publishers ... [who] wanted me to look it over and say something about it. This I did, in my reply to them. And it was in my reply to them that I mentioned the material I had taken from your earlier book, *My Dogs in the Northland*, and asked them to convey to you my thanks for the same. (L 2:679–80)

1 Probably *Hector My Dog: His Autobiography* (1905).

Appendix J: Buck's Travels

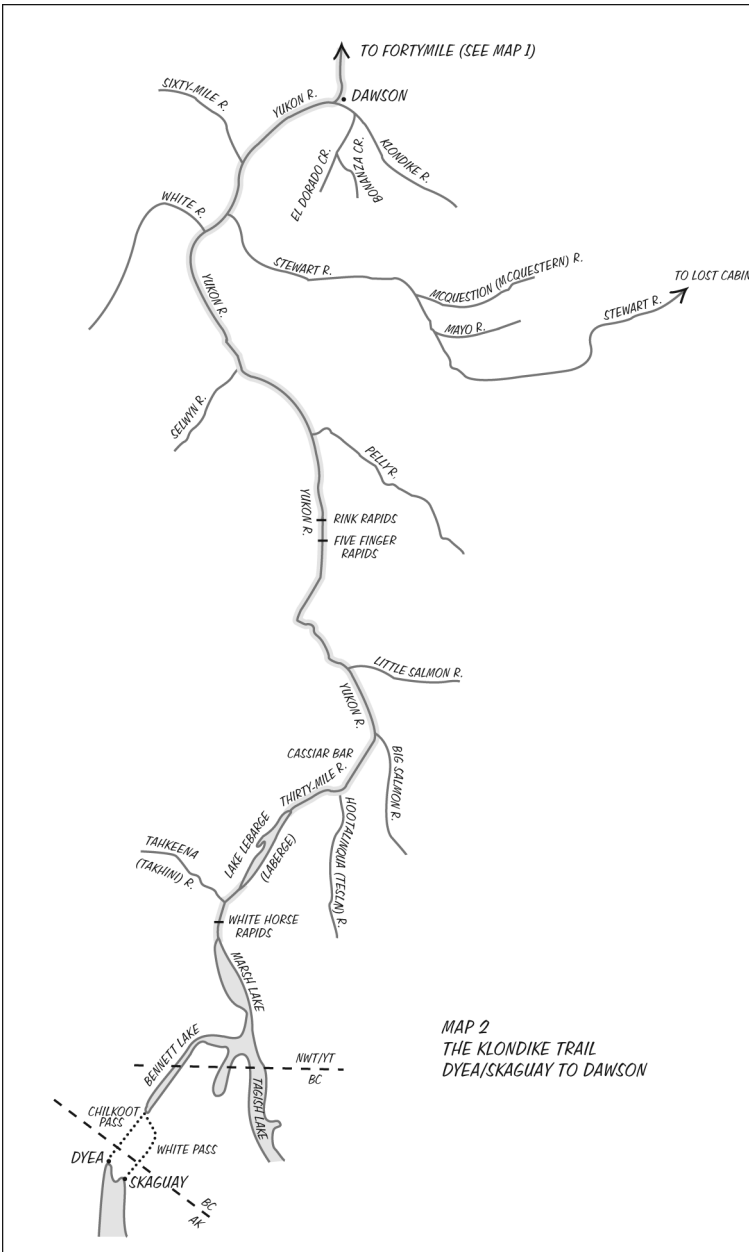
The three maps included here are not to scale and have all been simplified in order to show the locations of the non-fictional places mentioned in *The Call of the Wild* and “Bâtard” as clearly as possible. For actual geographical distances, please see the footnotes to the respective texts.



Map 1.

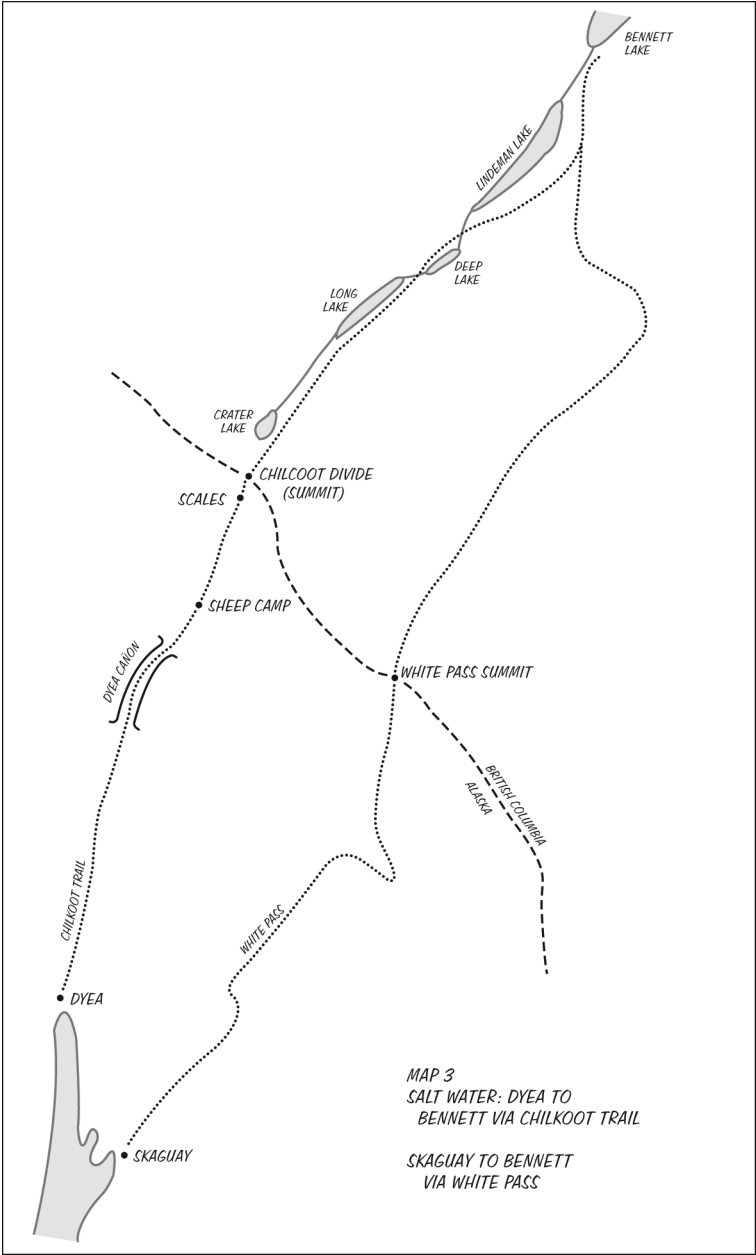
To the Northland: Santa Clara, California, to St. Michael's, Alaska

This map also shows the non-fictional places mentioned in “Bâtard.”



Map 2.

The Klondike Trail: Dyea/Skaguay to Dawson



Map 3.
Salt Water: Dyea to Bennett via Chilkoot Trail; Skaguay to Bennett via White Pass

Buck's Itineraries

The geography of *The Call of the Wild* “is as precise and accurate as that of a travel book” (Johnson 4), with two exceptions: one inadvertent error (see *CW* 80, note 1); and the deliberate vagueness at the very end of the novella as Buck metamorphoses into the legendary Ghost Dog.

In the course of *The Call of the Wild*, Buck makes eight significant trips: one from California to the Northland (Map 1); five from Salt Water (Dyea or Skaguay) to Dawson or back via the Klondike Trail along the Yukon River (Maps 2 and 3); and two with John Thornton to other places in the Northland (Map 1). Summaries of each trip follow.

Trip 1 (fall 1897). Buck is abducted from Judge Miller’s place in the Santa Clara Valley at the southern end of San Francisco Bay and taken by train to San Francisco, then by ferry and express train to Seattle (all Map 1). From there he is shipped on the *Narwhal* and unshipped at Dyea, in the Alaska panhandle near Skaguay (Maps 2 and 3).

Trip 2 (late fall 1897). Under Perrault and François, who are carrying Canadian Government despatches, Buck goes north from Dyea to Dawson with eight other dogs: Spitz, Dave (breed unspecified), and the huskies Billee, Joe, Sol-leks, Pike, Dub, and Dolly. They enter Canada at the Chilcoot Divide (Map 3), gain access to the Klondike Trail via the frozen headwaters of the Yukon River, and follow this trail to Dawson (Map 2). Significant features of this trip include: the killing of Curly at Dyea; Buck’s first exposure to the song of his ancestors; the attack on Perrault’s team by starving huskies at Lake Le Barge; the madness and death of Dolly at Pelly River (she has contracted rabies from the huskies at Le Barge); and a week in Dawson (all Map 2).

Trip 3 (winter 1897). Buck goes south from Dawson back along the Klondike Trail with Perrault, François, and the same team (minus Dolly). At the end of the trip they take White Pass (Map 3) to Skaguay rather than the Chilkoot Trail to Dyea. The highlight of this trip is the pursuit of the snowshoe rabbit at Takheena (or, more likely, Selwyn) (Map 2), leading to Buck’s defeat of Spitz and his ascendancy to the leadership of the dog-team. Later, the huskies Teek and Koonah are added to the team at Rink Rapids (Map 2). This is a record-breaking trip, and Perrault and François are feted in Skaguay.

Trip 4 (winter 1897–98). Buck goes north from Skaguay to Dawson with the Scotch half-breed and a dozen other dog-teams (more than a hundred dogs in all) to deliver mail.

Trip 5 (early spring 1898). Buck goes south from Dawson to Skaguay with the same company after an inadequate two-day rest in Dawson. Billee, Joe, Sol-leks, Dave, Dub, and Pike remain from Buck's original team. At Cassiar Bar (Map 2) the ailing Dave is released from the traces and later he is put down. At Skaguay the Scotch half-breed, having worked his team too hard, replaces them with new inside dogs and after four days sells Buck and the remainder of his team to Charles, Mercedes, and Hal.

Trip 6 (spring 1898). Buck goes north from Skaguay with Charles, Mercedes, and Hal, heading for the Klondike with an overloaded sled and fourteen dogs: six new outside dogs (three pointers, one Newfoundland, two mongrels), six of the original team, and Teek and Koonah. These dogs are too numerous for the rations, which give out at the Five Fingers (Map 2). By then, Dub has been put down and the six new outside dogs have starved to death; thereafter Billee and Koonah are put down. At Thornton's camp at White River (Map 2), Buck (the sole remaining outside dog) is too exhausted to rise. Buck's trio of owners, departing with Pike, Sol-leks, Joe, and Teek, fall through rotten ice and drown. Thereafter Buck travels downriver by raft to Dawson with Thornton, his partners Hans and Pete, and their dogs Skeet (an Irish setter) and Nig (a bloodhound/deerhound).

Trip 7 (spring–summer 1898). Grubstaked from the sale of the raft lumber, the members of the Thornton team travel down the Yukon into Alaska (Map 1). There they go prospecting on the Tanana River (where Thornton orders Buck to throw himself off a cliff); near Circle City (where Buck saves Thornton from "Black" Burton); and on Forty-Mile Creek (where Buck saves Thornton from drowning) (all Map 1).

Trip 8 (spring 1899–?). After another spell in Dawson in winter 1898–99 (when Buck breaks out the sled), Thornton and his team journey in spring 1899 east up the Stewart River, past its junctions with the McQuestion and Mayo Rivers, to the Stewart headwaters (Maps 1 and 2) and on into the mountains forming the continental divide, where they hope to find the fabled Lost Mine and Cabin. In fall 1899 they enter a weird lake country, wander there throughout the

winter, and in spring 1900 they find a rich gold deposit in a broad valley. These and subsequent events cannot be pinpointed on any map, and conclude at some unspecified time after 1901.

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[Two valuable online resources devoted to Jack London are Sonoma State University's *The Jack London Online Collection* at <http://london.sonoma.edu/> and the independent website *The World of Jack London* at <http://www.jacklondon.net>. Both contain a wealth of useful biographical and bibliographical material, as well as a large archive of works by London. The Internet Archive at <http://www.archive.org/index.php> contains many facsimiles of original editions of books by London.]

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